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420 25 PREMIER CANNABIS & CULTURE PLATFORM . JUAN QUESADA



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elcome to the Honeysuckle 420 Edition, our annual celebration of freedom, creativity, and the culture that continues to shape this movement we all call home. This year, we're turning the volume all the way up—with not one, but two powerhouse cover stars redefining legacy in their own lanes.

Our cover stories speak to transformation, vision, and roots:

We chopped it up with the legendary Ice-T, the cultural icon whose life has spanned music, activism, television, and now a new chapter in plant medicine. His partnership with The Medicine Woman and their Jersey City dispensary opens the door to a deeper dialogue about free will, sobriety, and finding peace in the chaos.

On the flip side, Juan Quesada, founder of BackPack Boyz, shares his raw, unfiltered journey—from MMA training and street hustle to building a national powerhouse brand. His rise is a testament to grit, growth, and staying rooted in authenticity.

From coast to coast and around the globe, this issue is full of pioneers and original voices pushing the culture forward. We shine a spotlight on Derry Brett, the legendary breeder behind Barney's Farm, whose work in genetics since the 1980s continues to shape cannabis worldwide.

Ciaran O'Leary—our Big Bad Reefer Daddy—bridges policy, education, and community in New York and beyond. He's one of those rare connectors who sees the full vision and helps others rise within it.

We head overseas with Compound Genetics and Doja to experience Spannabis through the lens of legacy, flavor, and global expansion. And Mechanics Farm reminds us why the grass is always greener when grown with intention.

In the music realm, hip hop icons Havoc of Mobb Deep and Large Professor talk



Every 420, we hope to move the needle on normalizing cannabis - not just for those in the industry, but for people across the globe. Look at the progress! This issue gives a platform to art and music icons, food geniuses, design experts, cultivation gurus, communications pros, master photographers, passionate advocates. Each of them has a different story to share, but they all help the wider world understand this plant's power to touch our lives in various ways. If you're inspired by what you see here, talk to a friend about it! Or check out Laws (norml.org). It's time for you to join the conversation too.

- Jaime Lubin, Editor-At-Large



o & Legend Ice-T



inspiration and elevation, while rising star Cash Cobain brings that NYC energy in full psychedelic drip.

We tap into new creative spaces too. Lindsay Loo breaks down the business of beauty, exploring what it really costs to get high—literally and figuratively. Lindsey Neff, founder of Larkspur Botanicals, blurs the lines between installation art, floral design, and brand activation in her whimsical wonderland of color and culture.

From visionary entrepreneurs like Rosie Mattio and Sara Payan to new voices like Akallah, our 420 centerfold and mystic muse, each story in this issue is layered with truth, transformation, and a little smoke for good measure.

Even our street game levels up: 0.125 OZ hits the streets with weedbag art so wild it belongs in a gallery—or your backpack.

We also explore powerful leadership with Somai Pharmaceuticals and HPI Canna, and highlight game-changers like the founders of Mr. Charlie's, turning plant-based food into revolution.

This edition is a tribute to those who build, elevate, and preserve. To the OGs and the new school. To the storytellers, cultivators, creators, and truth-tellers who keep the fire burning.

Whether you're passing this issue in a smoke circle, reading between business calls, or flipping through while dreaming up your next big move—know that this is

For the disruptors.

For the visionaries.

For the culture.

Thank you for being part of our Honeysuckle family. We're just getting started.

With love and fire,

Ronit Pinto

Founder & Publisher, Honeysuckle Media



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Publisher and Founder

Ronit Pinto

Creative Director

Sam Long

Editor-At-Large

Jaime Lubin

Guest Designer

Marie Kattner

Graphic Designers

Veronica Haglund

Contributors

Daniel Adler-Golden Inis Atkinson Chloé Harper Gold Lindsay Loo Shawanna Vaughn Arthur Rambert

West Coast: Shirley Ju

Cover Design & Intro Pages

MNML

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Camera Assistant

Jack Blasko

Advisory Board Bobbi Paley

Bobbi i dicy

Special Thanks Shevy Shovlin

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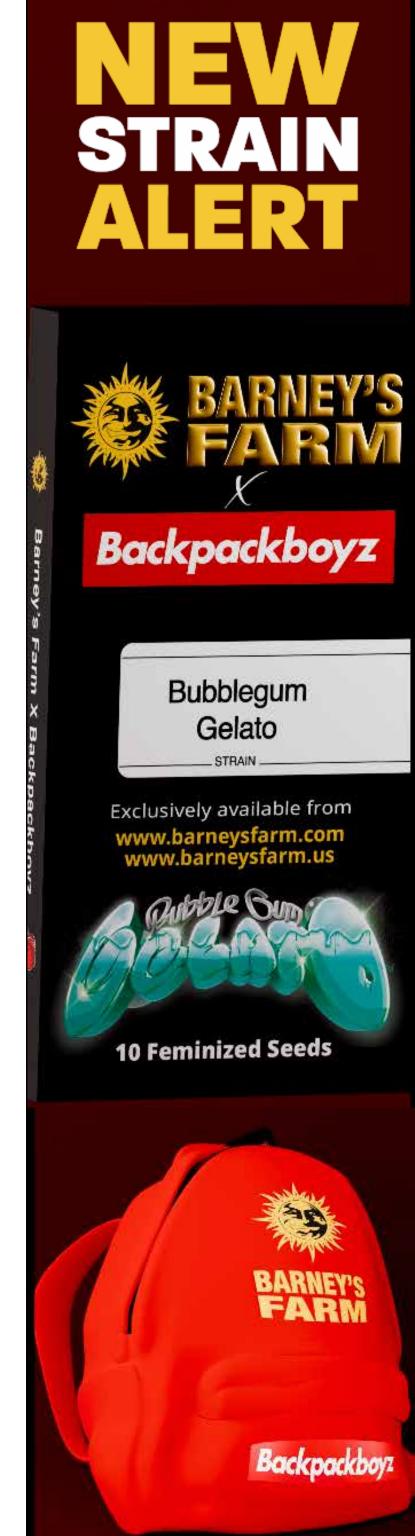
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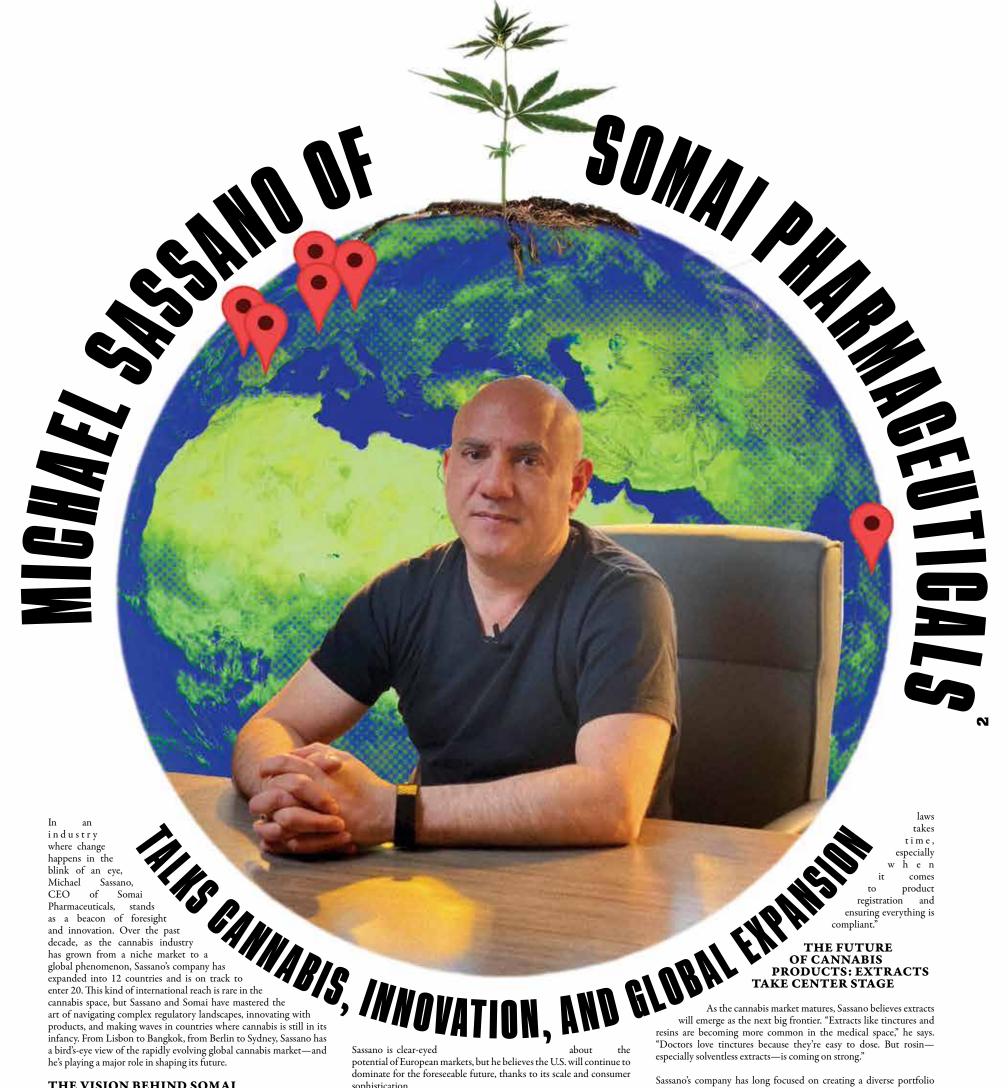




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he's playing a major role in shaping its future. THE VISION BEHIND SOMAI PHARMACEUTICALS

Somai Pharmaceuticals was built on one fundamental belief: cannabis is not just a commodity, it's a transformative global medical product. "We're one of the few groups that have built a true global footprint," Sassano explains. "We're competing with both big players and local brands on the ground. We've cracked the code on how to build cannabis operations that transcend borders."

a bird's-eye view of the rapidly evolving global cannabis market—and

This global vision is the backbone of Somai's success. The company is responsible for growing and distributing products for some of the most recognizable cannabis brands, including Cookies, across multiple continents. Somai is known for bringing sought-after products like Cookies to countries such as Germany, the UK, and Australia, while also diversifying its portfolio with vapes, extracts, and other product formats under the APRO brand. "It's multifaceted," says Sassano, outlining how Somai balances market demand with regulatory challenges in diverse regions. "Our job is to create products that meet the specific needs of each market. It's all about adapting."

GERMANY VS. THE U.S.: THE BATTLE FOR CANNABIS MARKET SUPREMACY

Germany's medical cannabis market is often discussed as the next big thing, with some predicting it could soon surpass the U.S. in size. But Sassano is more cautious. "Germany will hit a billion this year, but are they going to dethrone the U.S. as the heavyweight champion? I seriously doubt it," he says. While Germany's population of 86 million presents huge potential, Sassano points out that the country's medical market is still relatively new and limited to flower and oral drops. By comparison, the U.S. cannabis market—valued at \$34 billion—has a far more sophisticated and diverse product landscape, including tinctures, vapes, and concentrates.

dominate for the foreseeable future, thanks to its scale and consumer sophistication

AUSTRALIA: THE MOST ADVANCED CANNABIS MARKET

If there's one market that Sassano is particularly excited about, it's Australia. "Australia is by far the most advanced in terms of product diversity and accessibility," Sassano says, highlighting the fact that the country boasts over 1,400 cannabis products, from gummies to vapes. Compared to Germany, which still relies heavily on flower, Australia has embraced a much broader range of products, positioning itself as a leader in global cannabis innovation.

This product diversity, Sassano argues, is what sets Australia apart. As the market matures, Somai Pharmaceuticals is focusing heavily on expanding its offerings in Australia and ensuring that it can keep pace with the growing demand for cannabis in all its forms.

NAVIGATING REGULATORY HURDLES

In the world of cannabis, regulatory uncertainty is the constant backdrop. Countries have different rules, different regulations, and different cultural perceptions of cannabis. While some markets are more progressive, others remain incredibly cautious.

Sassano points to Portugal as an example of a market with lenient laws that has allowed Somai to grow and distribute products without the bureaucratic red tape that plagues more restrictive countries. "We have a production facility in Lisbon that grows Cookies exclusively," says Sassano. The Portuguese facility enables Somai to serve not only local markets but also to ship cannabis products across the European Union.

However, even in countries with more lenient laws, the logistics of exporting narcotics across international borders can be a nightmare. "It's a game of patience," says Sassano. "Navigating international cannabis

"Doctors love tinctures because they're easy to dose. But rosin especially solventless extracts—is coming on strong."

Sassano's company has long focused on creating a diverse portfolio of high-quality cannabis extracts. By staying ahead of these product trends, Somai is positioning itself to lead in an increasingly competitive

A FORWARD-LOOKING FUTURE

Looking ahead, Sassano is optimistic about the future of cannabis. With expansion into new markets like Spain, Brazil, and France, he believes Somai Pharmaceuticals is well-positioned to continue its growth. For Sassano, the focus isn't just on geographical expansion it's about reshaping the way cannabis is seen around the world. "It's not just about where we grow cannabis; it's about how we bring it to people," he says with quiet conviction.

As Somai continues to grow, its emphasis on education, product development, and navigating international regulations will be essential. Sassano understands that the future of cannabis isn't just about growth; it's about transforming the cannabis space into one that is recognized and respected globally as a legitimate and therapeutic

THE GLOBAL CANNABIS GAME

As a leader in the cannabis industry, Michael Sassano is shaping the future of cannabis across the globe. Whether he's talking about expanding into new markets, pioneering innovative products, or overcoming regulatory hurdles, it's clear that Somai Pharmaceuticals is in the driver's seat of global cannabis expansion.

For Sassano, the journey is far from over. With his forward-thinking leadership, Somai is poised to redefine what it means to be a global cannabis company. If the cannabis industry has taught us anything, it's that change is constant—and Michael Sassano is ready for it.

NEW YORK'S CANNABIS EMPIRE:

A House of Brands





HPI Canna is making waves in New York's burgeoning cannabis market with state-of-the-art cultivation, extraction, manufacturing, and distribution operations. A family-owned, women-led business, HPI Canna is building a sustainable and innovative cannabis ecosystem in the heart of New York's Hudson Valley, operating on a sprawling 434-acre farm.

A VISIONARY LEADER: KIMBERLY TANAMI

How One Woman's Mission is Transforming New York's Cannabis Landscape Kimberly Tanami, CEO and Founder of HPI Canna, is not only a dynamic entrepreneur but also a powerful thought leader in the cannabis industry. With over two decades of executive experience, Kimberly is reshaping the future of cannabis by prioritizing sustainability, innovation, and social equity. Her personal journey into the cannabis industry was deeply influenced by the loss of her sister to epilepsy, a tragedy that inspired Kimberly to explore cannabis as a potential treatment avenue. This personal connection has driven her mission to build a company that not only leads in business but also creates meaningful social change.

As a trailblazer in New York's cannabis industry, Kimberly shines as a leading advocate for inclusivity and social equity. Motivated by her desire to uplift underserved communities—especially those harmed by the War on Drugs—she has transformed HPI Canna into a beacon of opportunity. Whether you're a local farmer, fellow processor, or a brand rooted in legacy, LGBTQ+, social impact, or women-led endeavors, HPI Canna welcomes you into its supportive ecosystem. Driven by a passion to see small and midsize businesses thrive, Kimberly tirelessly champions policy reforms to keep New York's market fair and accessible.

BUILDING A THRIVING ECOSYSTEM

Under Kimberly's leadership, HPI Canna has become one of New York's top cannabis producers. The company launched Dank by Definition, its flagship brand and the state's #1 selling flower brand, while expanding its portfolio to include industry heavyweights like Packs and Ghost, along with social equity-focused brands such as 40 Tons, Drew Martin, Chef for Higher, and Her Highness. By bringing best-in-class brands to market and collaborating with innovative partners at every level of the supply chain, HPI Canna has established itself as a leader in New York's cannabis industry. The company has since grown into a powerhouse, supporting over 45 cultivators, 15 brands, and more than 300 retail outlets across the state.

PIONEERING GROWTH AND INNOVATION

HPI Canna is redefining cannabis distribution by combining its extensive brand portfolio and statewide network with TEC Marketplace's advanced, tech-driven wholesale platform. This partnership streamlines backend operations, enhances real-time customer tracking, and automates sales insights, optimizing efficiency at every level. Beyond distribution, TEC Marketplace provides a full suite of services, including marketing support, brand acceleration programs, and financial tools, driving market expansion across New York. By integrating HPI Canna's proven infrastructure with TEC Marketplace's digital capabilities, they are accelerating access to high-quality products while equipping brands with the resources needed to succeed.

Beyond distribution, HPI Canna is rapidly expanding its physical footprint. With an upcoming move into a 50,000-square-foot manufacturing facility in Poughkeepsie, the company is poised to lead in one of the country's most dynamic cannabis markets, driving job growth and economic impact throughout the state. HPI Canna isn't just a leader in New York's cannabis industry—it's the trusted go-to-market partner, offering unmatched infrastructure, expertise, and a proven network to bring visions to life. Whether an emerging brand, a legacy operator, or a cultivator looking to scale, HPI Canna ensures your products reach consumers efficiently and successfully, with a track record of launching and scaling top-performing brands across New York's evolving market.



KIMBERLY TANAMI: A THOUGHT LEADER IN CANNABIS

Beyond her role as CEO, Kimberly Tanami is widely recognized as a thought leader in the cannabis industry, frequently speaking at conferences and forums. Her advocacy for social equity, inclusivity, and the development of a healthy, sustainable cannabis market has positioned her as a key voice in shaping policy and culture in New York and beyond. Kimberly's leadership extends beyond business—she is committed to fostering a fair and competitive marketplace with sensible regulations. Determined to prevent New York from repeating the missteps of struggling markets like California, she co-founded the Empire Cannabis Manufacturers Association (ECMA) in 2024. This coalition of licensed manufacturers works to advance policies that ensure product quality, regulatory transparency, and economic growth. One of the group's initiatives led to the passage of legislation in December 2024 classifying cannabis as an agricultural crop, a landmark step in furthering industry progress. ECMA's core initiatives focus on creating a level playing field, enforcing compliance to protect consumers, and promoting diversity within the industry.

Kimberly Tanami isn't just building a cannabis company—she's setting the standard for how big corporations should behave. She refuses to let corporate greed and bureaucracy crush the small businesses and legacy operators who built this space from the ground up. For her, this isn't just business—it's about creating a market where everyone, not just the well-funded few, has a shot at success. It's about ensuring cannabis remains a force for healing, equity, and economic empowerment. New York has the chance to do things differently—to build an industry that is fair, sustainable, and driven by those who care about more than just the bottom line. Kimberly is here to make sure that happens, and she won't stop until it does.

For more information on HPI Canna, visit hpicanna.com and follow them on Instagram @HPICanna

HPI Canna is reshaping New York's cannabis industry with sustainability, innovation, and local partnerships—leading the charge in one of the most exciting and rapidly growing markets in the U.S., all under the leadership of thought leader Kimberly Tanami.

A BILLION REASONS TO LAUNCH IN NEW YORK



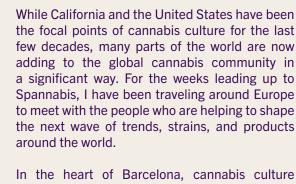
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DAN'S DISPATCH: THE ROAD TO SPANNABIS



In the heart of Barcelona, cannabis culture continues to thrive as one of Europe's most vibrant and diverse scenes. Spain remains a beacon for cannabis consumers, innovators, and entrepreneurs alike to collaborate. In recent years, private social clubs have become the central hub for cannabis aficionados, with a growing presence of international growers, artists, and brands looking to plant their flags in Barcelona's fertile ground.

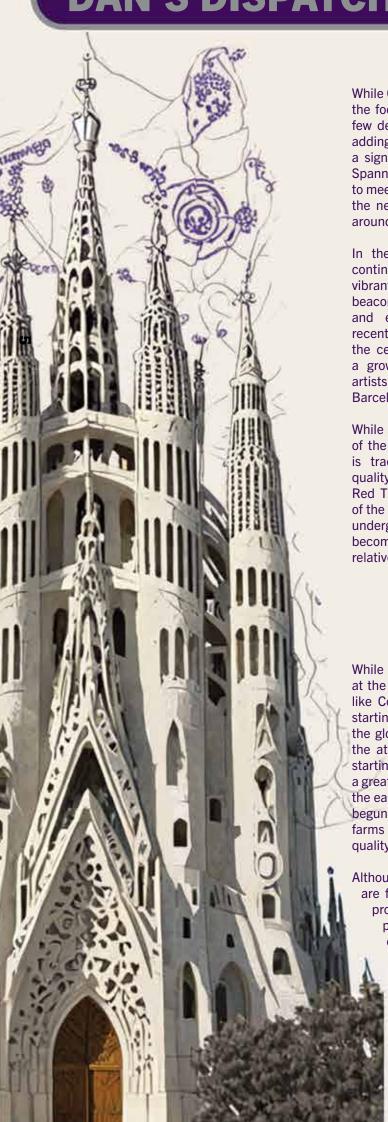
While at most clubs flower takes up the majority of the menu, the thing being smoked the most is traditionally made, old-school hash. High quality live rosin of flavors like Grape Gas and Red Tiger (a selection of Exotic²) remain some of the most sought after and rare products in the underground. However Moroccan hash, which becomes abundant after the annual harvest, is a relatively inexpensive product.

THE EMERGING MEDICAL MARKETS

While many US strains and flavors have been at the top of every stoners list for years, brands like Compound Genetics and Khalifa Kush are starting to show up in medical markets across the globe. While Germany has received most of the attention recently, Australia and Israel are starting to introduce US brands that want to have a greater international presence. While it is still in the early stages, US brands and companies have begun working more collaboratively with medical farms across the globe to ensure the highest quality product is achieved.

Although most medical producers and brands are focused on flower, we are starting to see products like live resin and rosin being produced at a high quality through collaborations between medical producers and American hash makers and brands.

While many companies based in the US are just now considering getting into the global medical markets, some legacy European operators have already taken the leap.

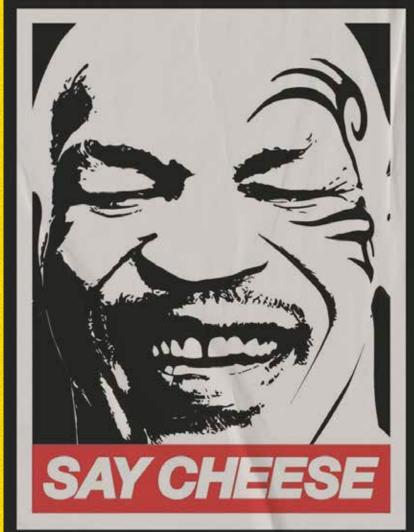


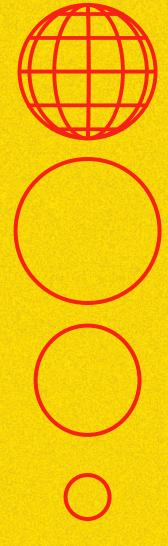












The Heart of a Movement in Los Angeles

In the heart of Los Angeles, where dreams are made and broken in equal measure, one restaurant has emerged not just as a dining destination, but as a movement—a revolution in the making. Mr. Charlie's isn't just another vegan spot; it's a manifestation of compassion, healing, and the power of second chances. This is a brand reshaping the narrative surrounding plant-based food, people, and the planet, one burger at a time.

The Journey of Taylor McKinnon and Aaron Haxton

At the helm of this vision are co-founders Taylor McKinnon and Aaron Haxton, a duo whose shared dream has taken on life-changing dimensions. McKinnon, a man whose personal story from homelessness and addiction to entrepreneurial success is as raw and transformative as the food he serves, joins Haxton—a world-renowned photographer and business partner—who brought his unique perspective and creativity to the project. Their

collaboration is a partnership rooted in the desire to create a space wher compassion, growth, and opportunity are at the forefront.

McKinnon's journey isn't just about him overcoming adversity—it's about the people he and Haxton have uplifted along the way, the lives they've changed, and the culture of redemption they've built within their business. Eleven years ago, McKinnon was homeless, struggling with addiction, and staring at rock bottom. "I didn't know where I was going or who I was anymore," he reflects, his voice carrying the weight of those years. But through the Dream Center, a rehabilitation program, McKinnon found his way out. "It wasn't just about saving myself—it was about helping others," he says. That moment sparked his drive to create a space for others to rebuild their lives.

The Birth of Mr. Charlie's

Thus, Mr. Charlie's was born—not just a plant-based fast food joint, but a sanctuary for healing. "This wasn't just about making food," McKinnon

The Vision and Soul of Mr. Charlie's



explains. "It was about creating a space where people could heal, grow, and feel like they had a second chance."

The vision took shape when McKinnon partnered with Haxton, who shared his passion for social impact. Together, they envisioned not just a restaurant, but a community. "We wanted to create a family," McKinnon says, "where kindness and second chances were as important as the food."

The Heart of Redemption

That ethos is felt in every corner of Mr. Charlie's. The restaurant is offering both plant-based burgers and redemption, "Everyone who works here has gone through some kind of rehabilitation," McKinnon adds proudly. For him, it's beyond offering jobs; the focus is creating opportunities for people to reclaim their lives.

Andrew's journey at Mr. Charlie's exemplifies the transformative power of redemption and compassion. Starting as a line cook fresh out of jail, he was driven by a profound desire to rebuild his life, reunite with his children, and support his family. Three years later, Andrew stands as the LA store manager, leading and inspiring others with his story of change.

"Andrew's story shows we're more than our past mistakes," Taylor said. "At Mr.Charlie's, we channel that energy into meaningful change. This all thrives because of the unwavering support from our customers, team, and brand sponsors. Together, we've transformed an idea into a movement."

Mike Tyson: A Champion of Redemption

Mr. Charlie's is entering a powerful new chapter with the involvement of legendary boxer Mike Tyson. Tyson is not just an endorsement—he is a partner and investor in the business, bringing his own story of redemption and transformation into the mix.

For McKinnon, Tyson's partnership represents everything the brand stands for: second chances and the possibility of radical change. "Mike Tyson is the perfect embodiment of what we stand for—second chances," McKinnon says. "He understands what it means to fall, to struggle, and to rise again. His journey has been an inspiration for us all."

Tyson's commitment to personal growth and healing aligns perfectly with Mr. Charlie's mission. His partnership brings not just celebrity power but real-world credibility to the brand. "Mike has become an integral part of our story. His support has been amazing, and it means a lot to have him alongside us in this movement," McKinnon shares.

Tyson's involvement is more than financial—it's personal. The former heavyweight champion, who has been open about his struggles with addiction, incarceration, and self-discovery, finds a deep connection with the ethos of Mr. Charlie's. Tyson's backing is a testament to the brand's authenticity and its commitment to transforming lives. Together, McKinnon, Haxton, and Tyson are building something much bigger than just a fast-food chain. They're creating a sanctuary where healing and opportunity meet.

As Mr. Charlie's grows, Adam Wilks, Co-Founder and CEO of Carma HoldCo, plays a crucial role in the brand's expansion. Known for his work with Tyson2.0 and Ric Flair Drip, Wilks is reshaping the wellness-driven brand landscape, and now, he's helping elevate Mr. Charlie's to new heights. "I'm excited to be part of something that's more than just a business—it's an opportunity to change the way people think about food, health, and the planet," says Wilks. His extensive background in the QSR space, including past ventures with Pinkberry and Yogen Fruz, makes him uniquely suited to help Mr. Charlie's expand beyond its Los Angeles base.

"Mike Tyson is a huge fan of the product," Wilks says. "He's cautious about what he eats, and he loves the fact that it's healthy without compromising on taste." And Wilks is a big fan of the food himself. "I took my kids there, and they didn't even believe it was vegan—they loved it!"

Ric Flair's involvement in Mr. Charlie's adds another level of star power to the brand. "Ric brings a larger-than-life persona that resonates with our audience," Wilks explains. "His legacy in the sports and entertainment world is massive, and having him on board with the brand is a perfect fit for

reaching new customers who connect with his iconic status."
"We're offering plant based, zero trans fat, low-cholesterol options for people who want something better for their bodies," he says.

The Environmental Impact: A Mission to Heal the Planet

Mr. Charlie's story isn't just one of personal transformation; it's also about sustainability. Every plant-based meal served reduces environmental harm. Since opening, Mr. Charlie's has saved millions of gallons of water, hundreds of thousands of square feet of forest, and prevented the suffering of tens of thousands of animals. For McKinnon, this is just the beginning. "It's about disrupting the system," he insists. "Plant-based food is a solution to global challenges, and we're proving it can be affordable, delicious, and effective."

Celebrity Endorsements and Growing Recognition

The movement hasn't gone unnoticed. In addition to Tyson and Flair, Mr. Charlie's has attracted the attention of other public figures who resonate with the brand's message of redemption and healing. As the restaurant grows in popularity, McKinnon and his team continue to focus on their core mission: creating a safe, inclusive space for healing, both for their employees and the planet.

The Expansion of a Plant-Based Empire

As Mr. Charlie's expands to open new locations, it's evident the vision is really about changing the culture surrounding food, compassion, and community. "We're not just making burgers," McKinnon asserts. "We're making a statement."

This statement is embodied in new menu items like the Mr. Fluffy, a McFlurry-style dessert made from Cassava that has redefined vegan indulgence. "It's the best vegan product I've ever had," McKinnon says with pride. This innovation speaks to a deeper goal: to show the world that plant-based options can be just as indulgent as traditional fast food, if not more so.

The Movement: Building a Community Beyond Food

Mr. Charlie's is growing fast, with plans to expand both nationally and internationally. The goal is clear—to become the largest plant-based fast food chain in the world. But for McKinnon and Haxton, it's not just about scale; it's about impact. "The real win isn't in sales—it's in the lives we're changing and the community we're building."

As McKinnon continues to build Mr. Charlie's, he never forgets his own journey of healing. It was during his battle with addiction that Matthew Barnett, founder of the Dream Center, gave him \$1,000 and told him, "God's saying you're going to come back one day and do something." This pivotal moment set McKinnon on a path of self-discovery, leading him to plant medicine, which played a role in his transformation. It's this experience that fuels the mission of Mr. Charlie's—healing through food and connection. "11 years later, I did come back—and now we're working with people who have gone through the same program I did," McKinnon adds, emphasizing the role of second chances in both his own life and the culture they're building at Mr. Charlie's.

The True Measure of Success

With every new location, Mr. Charlie's not only serves plant-based burgers but builds a brand that stands for compassion and opportunity. McKinnon and Haxton's goal is simple but profound: "When we all heal and come together, we can create something great."

In the end, Mr. Charlie's is more than a restaurant—it's a living, breathing testament to the power of second chances, the potential for human growth, and a movement that proves the impossible can be achieved. Through their plant-based menu and heart-centered mission, they are rewriting the script for what fast food can be. And with Tyson by their side, this plant-based empire is just getting started.

Franchise Inquiries

For those interested in joining the movement, Mr. Charlie's has been granted their FDD (Franchise Packet) to sell in select states, with many more to come. For franchise inquiries, please reach out to Franchise@mrcharlies.co.



Derry Brett's journey through the cannabis world is legendary—spanning from the rugged mountains of India to the international cannabis capital: Amsterdam. As the founder of Barney's Farm, a globally pioneering breeder and seedbank, Derry played a crucial role in shaping cannabis culture in Europe and beyond. Recently, we caught up with him ahead of his trip to New York for the 420 festivities. From his days as a young adventurer seeking cannabis genetics in Asia to his rise in Amsterdam's burgeoning cannabis scene, Derry has defined the term "global cannabis ambassador."

A PUNK'S PATH TO CANNABIS STARDOM

Derry's rise in the cannabis world wasn't typical. Raised in Ireland, he was drawn to the rebellious underground culture. "I never really saw myself as a 'hippie," he says. "I was more into punk, but I always gravitated towards the Bohemian lifestyle. That's what drew me to cannabis." His interest in cannabis wasn't just as a consumer but

also a cultivator. Growing up with plants, thanks to his father's work with crossbreeding fruit trees, gave Derry the foundation to work with cannabis genetics.

FROM THE HIMALAYAS TO THE CANNABIS STRAIN GAME

Derry's early cannabis experiences were nothing short of adventurous. In the Himalayas, he and his friends experimented with cha (hashishmaking), discovering how hash varied from valley to valley.

"It was all about experimentation back then," Derry recalls. "We realized we could start chasing genetics—seeing what we could find, cross, and grow."

He and his group traveled through India, Thailand, Laos, Cambodia, and Burma, smuggling genetics back to India. "We were hunting for genetics for our clients," he explains, adding that it wasn't just about personal use but also about finding plants that produced exceptional hash or weed.

At that time, cannabis was recognized more by its region—such as "Malana Valley Charas" or "Manali Hash"—rather than flashy names or complex terpene profiles. Derry chuckles at how different the cannabis world was back then. "There were no 'Lemon Cherry Gelatos' or whatever people call them now," he says.

The Birth of Barney's Farm and Amsterdam Ascension

After years of traveling, Derry arrived in Amsterdam at a time when cannabis was transitioning into

a more recognized industry. He recalls, "Amsterdam in the early days was a hashish city. There were no coffee shops, just cafés selling hash."

At a café called Barney's, owned by a friend named Nick, Derry began sharing the genetics he'd collected from Asia. "Nick started getting a lot of attention, especially from American tourists who were blown away by the quality," Derry says. "We started offering five or six strains, which was unheard of at the time."

A LEGACY OF INNOVATION AND COLLABORATION IN THE CANNABIS WORLD

Barney's Farm has been synonymous with quality cannabis genetics for decades. Founded in the late 1980s, it grew from a small operation into a global powerhouse, helping shape the modern cannabis landscape. Derry, who began working with Nick in 1980 and took over the shop in 1992, helped steer the brand to success.

"We started in 1980 as a hobby," Derry recalls. "By the 90s, it became a full-time passion project. We focused on stabilizing our strains and perfecting our genetics."

Barney's Farm also revolutionized marketing by distributing tens of thousands of seed packs globally, establishing itself in key markets like California and Europe. By 2000, the brand began making waves in the High Times Cannabis Cup, winning 60 percent of the cups from 2000 to 2017, thanks to its focus on terpene profiles and high THC content.

EXPANDING TO THE U.S. AND NEW COLLABORATIONS

Now, Barney's Farm is eyeing expansion into the U.S. market, building on its long-standing reputation. Derry is excited about new collaborations, working with creators like Doja and Juan Quesada from the BackPackBoyz, whose fresh perspectives complement the brand's legacy.

CRAFTING THE PERFECT STRAIN

Barney's Farm's dedication to genetics and innovation is at the heart of its success. "It's not just about picking a fire strain," Derry explains. "You have to stabilize the plant and ensure it maintains key characteristics, whether it's terps, potency, or flowering time."

His favorite strain, Dr. Grinspoon (named for legendary psychiatrist and cannabis scholar Lester



enetics



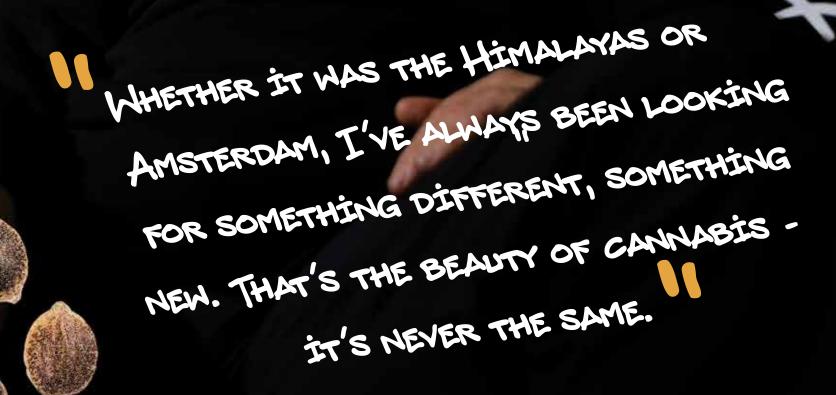














FROM EUROPE WITH LOVE

Ciarán O'Leary's journey through the cannabis industry is nothing short of unconventional. Starting out in the vibrant nightlife scene of Amsterdam, Ciarán dove deep into cannabis culture working at The Bulldog, one of the city's most iconic coffee shops. "It was the perfect introduction to everything—regulations, customer service, and the culture that surrounded cannabis. It was real, hands-on experience," he says. Originally from Ireland, he'd never imagined his career would lead him to the heart of Amsterdam's cannabis scene, but once he was in, there was no turning back.

Now based in Barcelona, Ciarán's become a key player in bridging the

cannabis worlds of Europe and the U.S. "Europe has so much to offer when it comes to cannabis," he explains. "But people are overlooking it. The U.S. market is huge, and it's time for European brands to make their mark." For Ciarán, it's all about helping these brands find their footing on a global scale—something he's done with notable brands like Doja and Cookies.

With Doja, for example, he's helped the brand expand into Europe, making sure they stayed authentic while still scaling up. "Doja really gets it. They're all about quality and culture, and that resonates with me," Ciarán says. "That's how you build something sustainablenot by chasing trends, but by understanding market dynamics and staying true to who you are."

Then there's Cookies. Ciarán played a big part in opening the first Cookies store in Barcelona, a moment he calls a milestone in his career. "Cookies is massive. To help them expand into Europe, into a city like Barcelona, with its deep cannabis roots, was huge." He pauses. "It was a game-changer."

But Ciarán's not just focused on the now—he's got his eye on the future. While Europe's regulatory environment still lags behind the U.S., he's optimistic. "It's slow, but every step counts," he says. "We've learned a lot from the U.S. about how to build a solid framework. And now, it's just a matter of time before Europe catches up."

His career's been shaped by a singular goal: to build lasting, meaningful businesses in an industry that was once on the fringes. "Cannabis is no longer this underground thing," he notes. "It's moving into the mainstream, and we need to treat it with the seriousness it deserves. This is a legitimate business."

And that's exactly what Ciarán's doing: helping brands grow in both recreational and medical markets, navigating the complexities of regulation, and positioning cannabis as more than just a product, but a legitimate part of the global healthcare conversation. "It's going to take time," he says, "but we're heading in the right direction."

Through his strategic approach, Ciarán's ensuring the brands he works with are set up for the long haul-built to thrive in emerging markets and established ones. "The future is bright," he says. "I'll be here, working to make that happen."

Photo: © Ciaran O'Leary @howdousay_ciaran







"EEOPLE have This PERCEPTION OF PUNK, DIKE You'RE supposed to be in the Gudder. Bud AT ThE ENd OF ThE DAY, PEOPLE ARE LIVING ThEiR Lives. HENRY'S RiGhu. iE You'vE Gou MODEY, You CAN hAYE A SWIMMING POOL AND SUILL bE PUNK, bECAUSE PUNK is About being drue do YouRsELE."



From the mic to the screen, Ice-T has remained a cultural force, navigating the evolving tides of hip-hop, the entertainment industry, and business ventures. Over the decades, he's become not only one of the most respected figures in music but also a powerhouse in activism, television, and cannabis culture. As we sit down with the legendary rapper, actor, and entrepreneur, we dive into his journey—from his groundbreaking contributions to gangster rap (he arguably started it) to his current venture with The Medicine Woman cannabis dispensary in New Jersey, co-founded by Playboy Playmate-turned-entrepreneur Charis Burrett, and everything in between.

SURVIVAL, SATIVA, AND THE MEDICINE WOMAN:

Opening a cannabis dispensary is no small feat. When first speaking with his now partners Charis Burett and her husband Luke, Ice said, "If I can get a license in New Jersey, would you guys mentor me? I was full blown, ready to get into business. Charis decided instead of mentoring me, they would franchise and partner fully."

It's this commitment to authenticity and culture that sets The Medicine Woman apart from the dozens of other dispensaries popping up across Jersey City. Ice-T has always believed in making an impact, whether it was through his music, his TV career, or now, his cannabis venture." We got some gold records. We're going to be signing some stuff. Treach, my partner and I, are going to be there." He adds, "It's got a little hip-hop flavor mixed with the '60s hippie vibe." He emphasizes that it's not just about selling weed, but about creating an experience. "It worked in California and we think it's going to work in Jersey."

For Ice-T, cannabis isn't just about recreational use—it's about healing, safety, and alternatives to the dangerous path Big Pharma can sometimes lead people down. "I think cannabis is a better alternative than Big Pharma. Those pills are wicked. Cannabis, on the other hand, has never killed anyone. You can find a strain that works for your body, and it's a hell of a lot safer than those pills."

Despite his deep ties to the culture, Ice-T has always been a man who's chosen sobriety. He historically didn't consume cannabis. "I never smoked weed," Ice-T says. "I was straight edge. I didn't do any drugs, didn't drink, didn't do anything. I sold weed though. I was the guy that would sell it. I would sell it and not partake, which was funny to people." His decision to stay clean wasn't about rejecting the culture around him, but about safety. "When I was in the streets, I wanted to be clear-headed," he explains. "I wasn't trying to get caught slipping. If you're out there hustling, you have to stay sharp. You can't afford to be out of

your mind." For Ice-T, sobriety wasn't just a personal choice—it was a survival tactic in an environment where staying in control meant staying safe.

At the core of Ice-T's cannabis philosophy is a commitment to restorative justice. As someone who's seen the devastating effects of the War on Drugs firsthand, he views cannabis as a means of giving back, righting old wrongs. "If you went to jail for marijuana and it wasn't a violent offense, you should be able to go home," Ice-T says. "If we can make money off of cannabis, then those people should be out of jail."

A LIFE OF HUSTLE: FROM THE STREETS TO THE SCREEN; FROM HUSTLER TO HOLLYWOOD

Ice-T's hustle didn't start with cannabis. It started after tragedy struck early on in life. "When you lose both your parents, you end up either becoming a hustler or you give up. It's not easy, but it teaches you resilience," he says, reflecting on his youth. "I didn't have a choice but to hustle."

Growing up without both parents—his mother passed when he was in the third grade and his father when he was in the seventh—Ice-T found himself on his own. He used his natural instinct for survival to hustle his way through life, first in the streets and later in the world of hip-hop. It's where he honed the mindset that would propel him to greatness: That pain forced a young Tracy Marrow to become Ice-T, turning trauma into a roadmap for survival. He made his way through South Central L.A. with hustle in his heart and a mind trained on the long game. "Nobody wakes up with your dreams. You have to go out there and get what you want." Ice-T's story is one of self-determination, the kind that turned him from a young man who could have easily fallen through the cracks into a global icon.

He watched kings fall—dudes with real power who crumbled under the weight of addiction. "I saw plenty of drug dealers lose everything, getting high off their own supply." That alone kept him clean. It wasn't just a personal choice; it was a survival tactic.

But he's quick to point out that his rise to fame wasn't a straight line. "I'm always looking for opportunities," he says, but those opportunities didn't come easy. "I don't invest in anything that I'm not involved in. I've learned that if you want something to work, you have to put yourself in it, all the way." This approach—hands-on and always authentic—is something that he's carried through to his cannabis business, which has its roots in this same bustle.



LONGEST MALE TV ACTOR IN HISTORY

Ice has a rare claim to fame in the world of television as the longest-running male actor on TV. "25 seasons of 'Law & Order: SVU," he says with unmistakable pride. That kind of longevity is almost unheard of, especially in a business that's constantly searching for the next big thing. "It's wild, man. To be on a show that long? It's almost unheard of," he continues. "Most shows don't even make it past a couple seasons, let alone two dozen. But I've been fortunate to be part of something that just keeps connecting with people, year after year." It's not just about the numbers for Ice-T—it's the recognition of being part of a cultural mainstay that's outlasted nearly every other show in the genre.

POWER

"I can't retire," Ice-T says, firmly rejecting the notion of slowing down. At 67, he's as driven as ever, pushing himself to the limit in every area of his life. "Every year I start off and I say, these are what I'm trying to do this year. This year, 'Law & Order' is number one, trying to finish this Body Count album, and we got this dispensary." But as he's gained in wisdom, he's become more intentional about his choices. "As you get older, things become more precious. You just think, if I'm going to do it, I really gotta fucking want to do it," he admits.

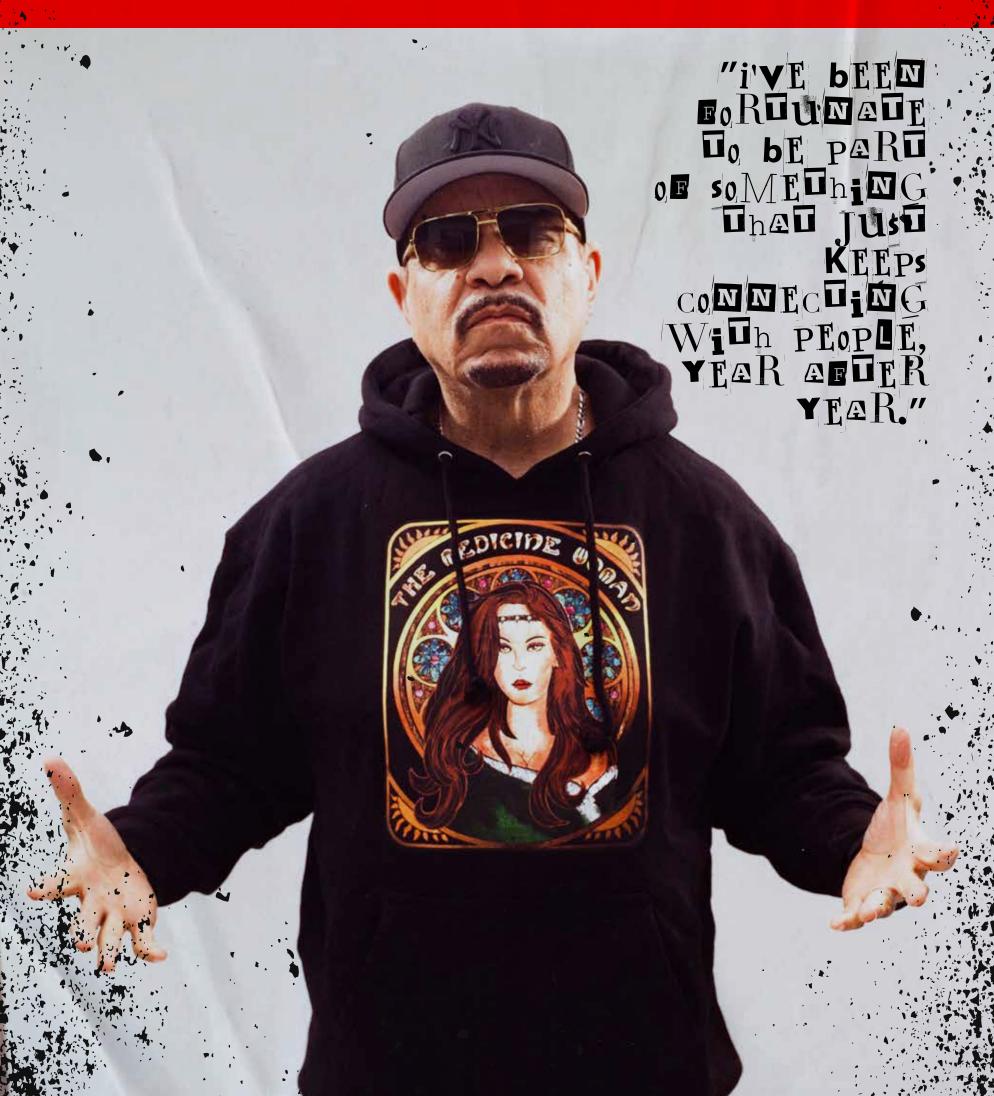
"When Henry Rollins talked about punks not being too punk to own a swimming pool, I thought that was funny," Ice-T says. "People have this perception of punk, like you're supposed to be in the gutter. But at the end of the day, people are living their lives. Henry's right. If you've got money, you can have a swimming pool and still be punk, because punk is about being true to yourself."

While the culture has changed, Ice-T remains a constant, a guiding force who's never strayed too far from his roots. He's aware of the shifting dynamics of both the cannabis industry and hip-hop, and he's determined to keep his stake in both. "We don't want them to disrespect it. Respect the culture," he says, speaking about hip-hop. "At the end of the day, hip-hop was invented by kids. It's their culture, and we just hope they carry it forward."

Ice-T's philosophy is clear: hustle, adapt, and respect the culture that got you here. His journey—from off the porch to a cannabis dispensary in New Jersey—embodies the hustle that has fueled his life and career.

"The acronym for OLD?" he smirks. "Out Living Dummies."

MIC DROP.

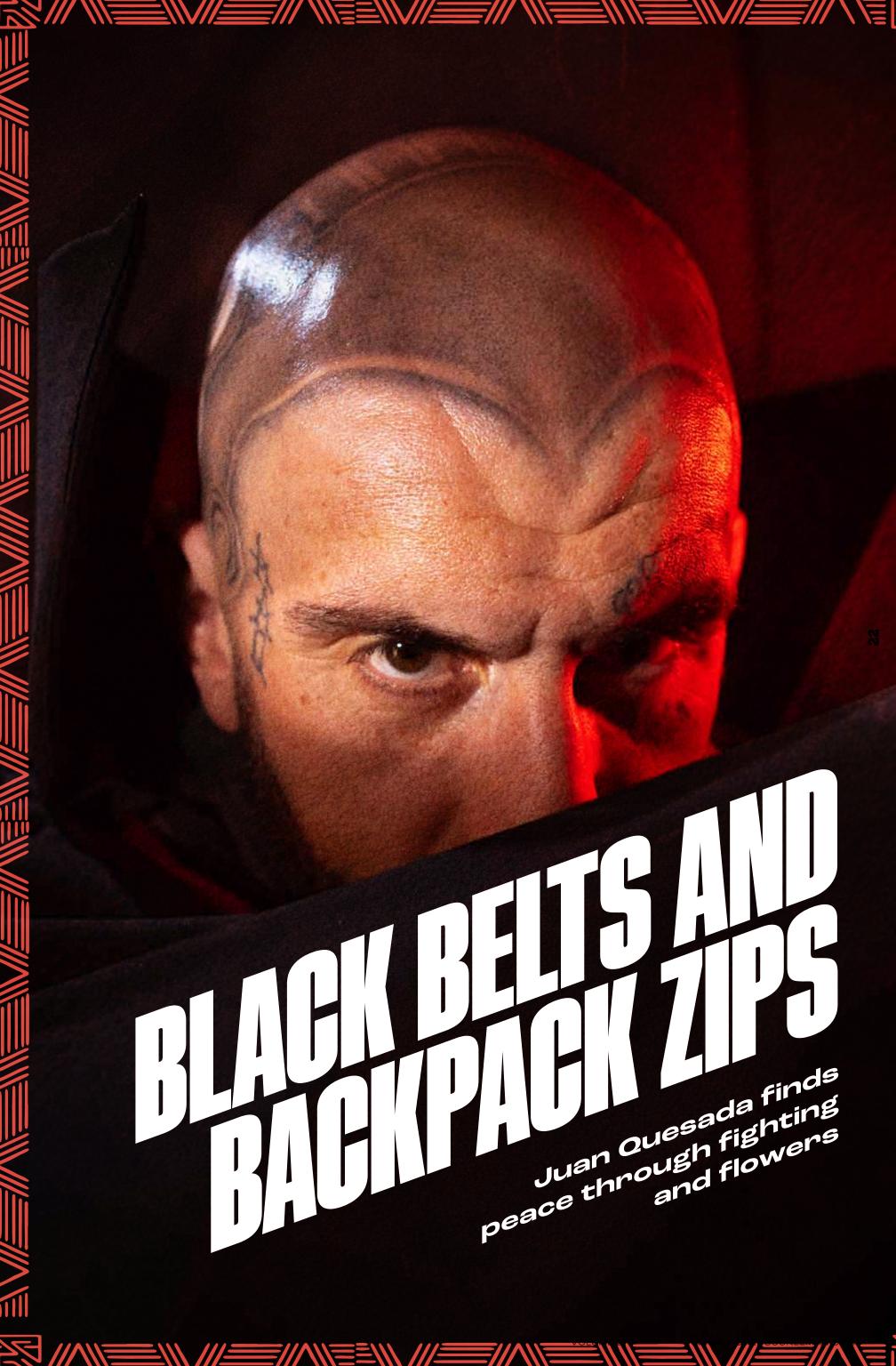






First TASTE: Akallah "n "Candy Paint" When it comes to flower, Akallah Figueroa— known as "24Kay" for good luck-knows her stuff. The model, plant professional, and connoisseur has long been trusted for her discerning palate and deep appreciation of terps. Fresh off our cover shoot with BackPack Boyz Juan Quesada himself, we gave 24Kay an early preview of Candy Paint—a cross between Candy Fumes and Permanent Marker, from the iconic brands BackPackBoyz x Preferred Gardens, "bred by Ryan and grown by Dave." "This one's definitely a ten out of ten," she said. "It's giving terp. I was still tasting it even after smoking." Candy Paint has an intense, lingering flavor profile and a smooth, euphoric ride. "Permanent Marker is one of my favorites," she added. "So this one? I'm smiling. I know it's good." @akallahhh VOLUME 21 WWW.HONEYSUCKLEMAG.COM







Juan Quesada is like an artichoke—tough, spiny, unapologetically armored on the outside, but peel back the layers and you'll find a heart that's seasoned by struggle and softened by survival. From the moment the entrepreneurhe walks in, there's an energy—quiet, confident, forged in fire. "I just look like this, bro. I'm a cooler cat than Heathcliff," he says, with a half-smile that's seen both the streets and the spotlight.

Long before he launched Backpack Boyz—one of the most recognizable cannabis brands on the West Coast—Quesada was grinding. Selling tapes and CDs as a kid turned into hustling weed, then other things, then back to weed. He doesn't glorify his criminal past, but he doesn't hide from it either. On changing lanes to cannabis exclusively, "I just wanted to be cool. I wanted to make a living. I wanted to not have to look over my shoulder. I wanted when a fucking cop got behind me, I wanted to not give a fuck."

From ages 18 to 25, he was locked up more often than not. "Between those years I was probably only home, maybe about a grand total of 18, 19 months," he recalls. The pattern was brutal—out for a month, back for six.

Everything changed when Quesada discovered mixed martial arts. It started at a friend's house, with a guy who wouldn't stop bragging about his skills in the sport. "He was just talking a lot about him being really good in the sport of MMA," Quesada recalls. "It was really actually kind

of arrogant [now] that I look back at it... I seen [sic] them kind of giving it up to this dude. So I was like, 'Ddamn, he must be kind of good."

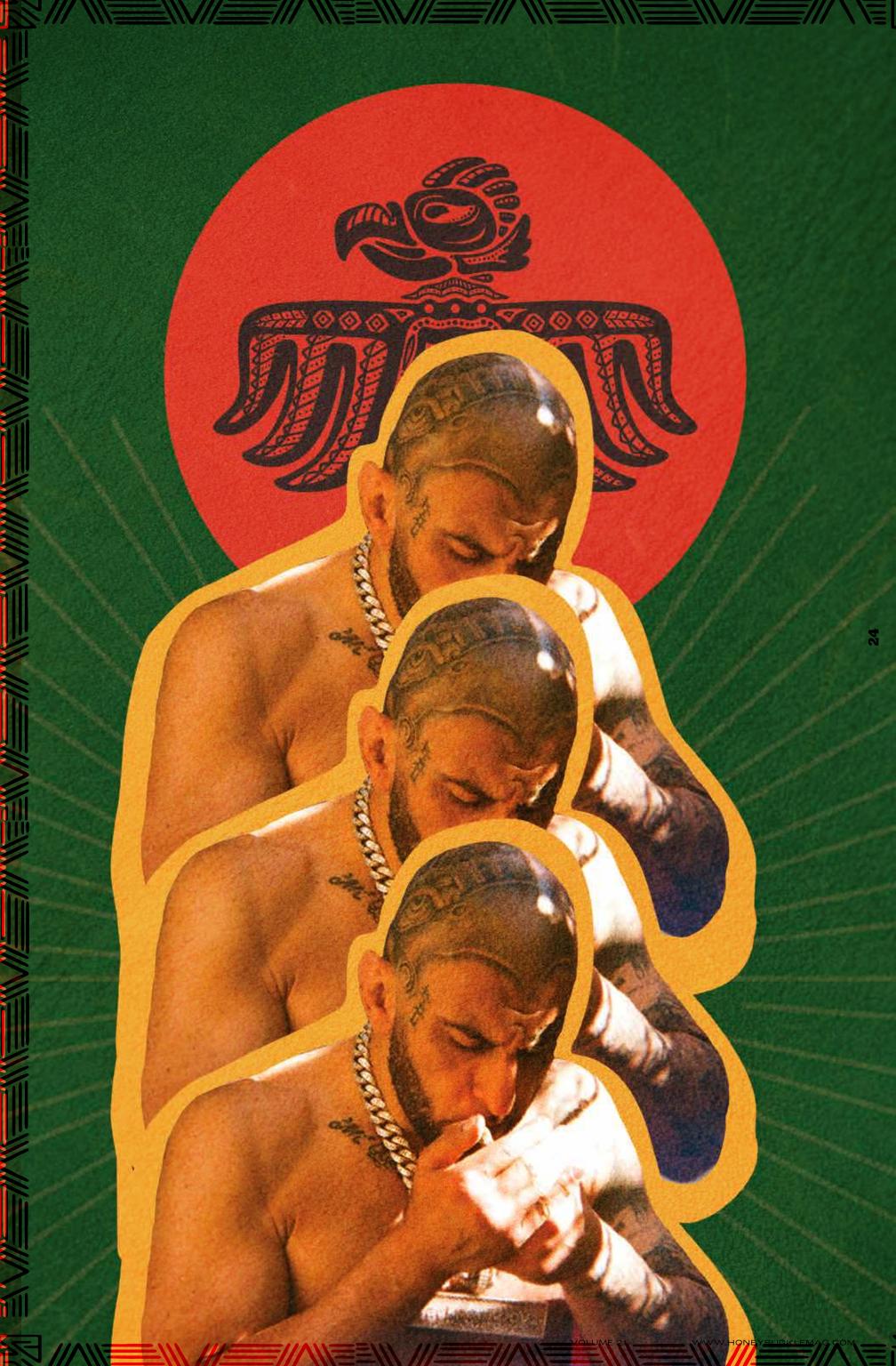
But Quesada wasn't sold. "I don't really feel like he possesses what I possess inside. So if he got good, then I could probably really get good." Intrigued but skeptical, he asked the guy where he trained. "He told me about it, where to go. He kind of laughed when he told me... but now I understand why. It's because throughout my 20 years of doing it, people always ask me about doing it... and they never show up."

Quesada did show up. "I went and I never looked back."

Training gave him structure, purpose, and a new code to live by. "The second that I stop training... is when I tend to start making bozo decisions," he admits. "That shit did everything. That shit changed my life all the way, all the way around the board. And I feel like I owe everything to that."

His commitment was unbreakable. "The only time I've ever not trained or still to this day right now, the only way I won't train is if I'm injured," he says. "For me, it's my life."

He also found himself through failure. "For a long time, I was getting the shit beat out of me for the longest," Quesada says. "I was the nail for the longest, longest amount of time. And I think that's what ultimately turned—it turned my mind into what it is—is from being the nail."



QuesadaJuan would become the hammer.

That humility translated into discipline. "I would say for me [it] would be mostly just to not be around the wrong people anymore," he says. "Not surrounding myself with the shit that just is not going to take me to the next step that I need to be. Simple as that."

That same discipline led him to build Backpack Boyz, brick by brick, starting with a delivery business in 2016. "I didn't even realize it was this," he says now. "The story of this brand is as organic as you can get. I never force- fed nothing [sic]. I've been lucky by the grace of God to get everything—it was there."

Today, Backpack Boyz operates multiple locations in California, with a new one opening this 4/20 in Cathedral City—formerly a Dr. Greenthumb shop. "It is pretty cool," he admits. "I'm excited. So you know what it is—I try to stay as calm as I'm staying while I'm talking to you, but inside like hell yeah, I'm happy."

Quesada still trains. Still competes. But now he's just as focused on flavors as he is footwork. "I like good fucking weed," he says. "That fucking is

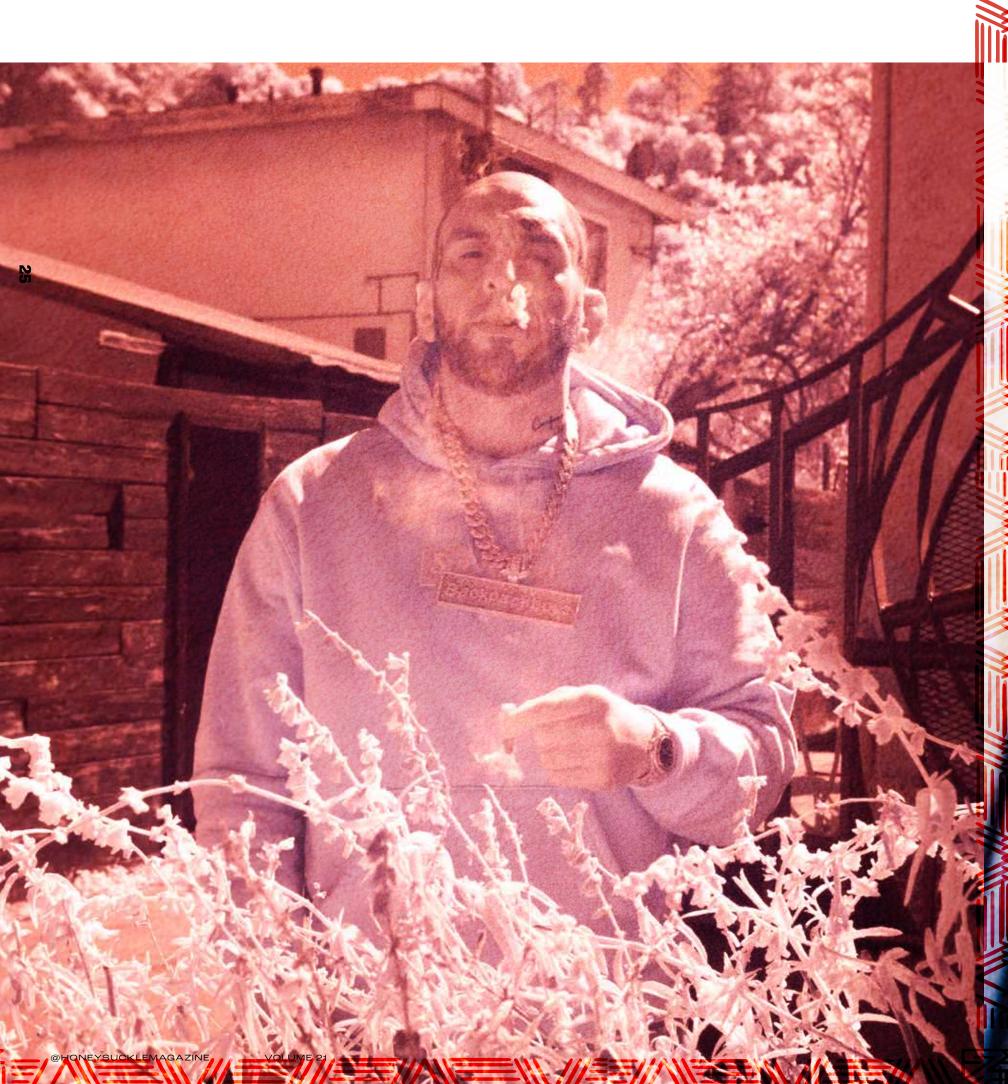
grown the way that it's supposed to be grown and tastes the way that it's supposed to taste."

He's currently working on exclusive new drops with renowned cultivator Preferred Gardens and the legendary Derry Brett of Barney's Farm. "That right there was a new pheno that was grown by Preferred Gardens. We're calling it Candy Paint," he says of one standout strain. "It's a Candy Fumes x Permanent Marker cross, and it's fucking amazing." Shout- out to Ryan Bartholomew of Doja (our last issue's cover!) for the genetics.

Another pheno from the same cross is being released as Acetone. "We're calling it Acetone, but it's basically another pheno of the same cross, the Candy Fumes x Permanent Marker and it's fucking amazing."

There's also a new strain called LFG ("Let's Fucking Go"), a Zebert x ZkittlezSkittles cross that Derry passed along. "I took those cuts, gave those to Dave [Polley, founder of Preferred Gardens]. I'm looking forward to seeing what Dave is going to do with those."

Quesada's reverence for Derry runs deep. "Derry's journey and Derry's movement is a crazy one. And you judge the book by his cover and you'll



never know the fucking stories that this man got," he says. "You sit down, you talk with him a little bit and he shares some of the stuff... some of the stories that he's told me, I was just like, 'Yyo, I would've never expected you to have these stories."

"He was someone that was really risking it at a time when it just wasn't cool to do it. It just didn't have anywhere near what it has now. He truly had a love for the plant and a love for breeding and a love for what it was that the industry needs for a long time."

"He's a good dude. He's respectful. He has a great head on his shoulders. He doesn't deal with no bullshit [sic]. He reminds me of, like I said, of what I want to be when I reach his age in a lot of ways."

His ultimate goal? "Perfect case scenario would be [to] sell the company. It goes federally legal, right?

So boom... Coca-Colas and Marlboro and all these motherfuckers coming in." But he doesn't want to walk away—just scale it with integrity. "I would still be on salary to do what I do and to still pump it like I pump it and to still create like a motherfucker creates for it and to just still, because I got that."

That dream is rooted in the same truth he found on the mat: consistency, vision, and ownership. "I'm going to have that drive for this shit in me until the day that I die."

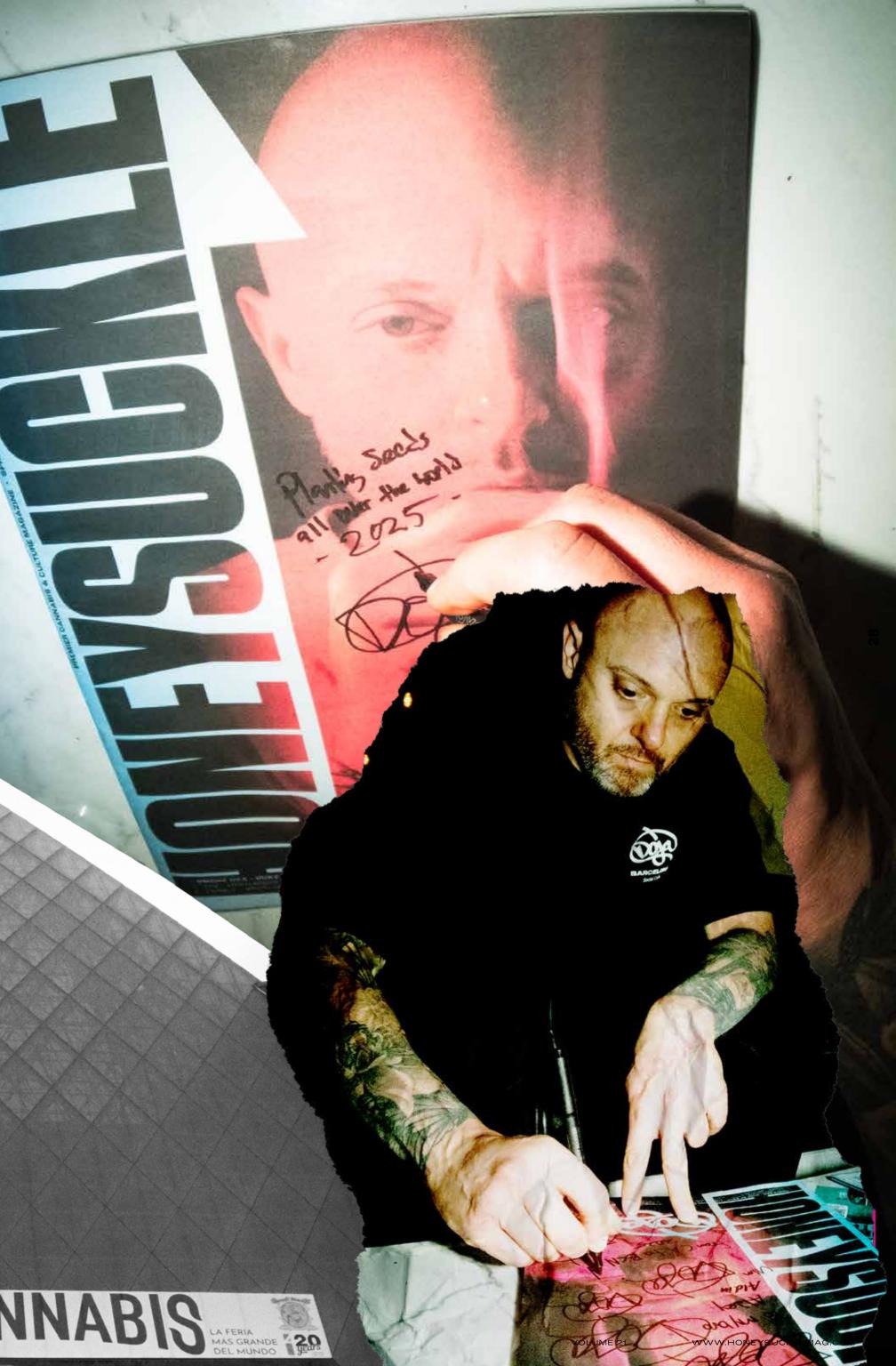
Backpack Boyz may be a business—but for Juan Quesada, it's also a path, a platform, and a promise to do better than the day before.

For more information, visit backpackboyz.com @officialbackpackboyz @quesada925

I WANT TO SEE MORE PEOPLE LIKE ME LIKE ME WIN— PEOPLE WHO CAME FROM THE STRUGGLE.













ROOTED IN SUNSHINE, BLOOMING NATIONALLY:

A Conversation with Steph Frohock,
VP of Marketing at The Flowery



"I've seen women in leadership roles here at The Flowery, and it's inspiring to see how the company creates opportunities for all individuals to succeed" Coming from a family with a green thumb but choosing to pluck an even thornier thorn, cannabis marketing, Steph Frohock, the Vice President of Marketing at The Flowery, plots a steady course. With a career spanning over a decade in brand-building, she brings a wealth of experience across finance, marketing, and operations. Combining her passion for growth and her expertise in strategy, Frohock has helped The Flowery carve out a niche in the competitive cannabis industry.

Frohock's journey to cannabis marketing began in the alcohol industry, where she developed a strong foundation in brand-building and customer engagement. Her transition into cannabis was driven by her entrepreneurial spirit and the opportunity to be part of an industry poised for massive growth. "I grew up in a family business, so the transition to cannabis felt natural," Frohock reflects. "The opportunity to work with people who share a vision for change in this space has been incredibly rewarding."

At The Flowery, Frohock oversees all aspects of marketing, delving into such diverse arenas as experiential marketing, like physician outreach and events, to facets of digital marketing including website, email, loyalty programs, and ads. Since joining the company, she has been instrumental in developing and executing creative campaigns that have helped The Flowery thrive in a highly regulated market. Cannabis marketing, in particular, poses unique challenges, particularly due to restrictions on advertising. However, Frohock and her team have found ways to circumvent these obstacles by leveraging word-of-mouth referrals, partnering with medical professionals, and using innovative methods like offering coupons, which have proven highly effective in increasing customer engagement.

The cannabis landscape is unique not only because of its regulatory environment but also due to the market's evolving nature. Frohock has seen firsthand the differences between Florida's medical market and New York's newly launched recreational market. In New York, there is more freedom for marketing initiatives such as billboards and event hosting, which are restricted in Florida's more conservative cannabis space. The shift has allowed The Flowery to experiment with new strategies, including the launch of a customer loyalty program, which has been met with strong success. With this shift in focus, Frohock sees the New York market as a place where The Flowery can expand its brand and reach a broader audience.

As a woman in a male-dominated industry, Frohock has also experienced the unique opportunity to be part of a growing movement that is increasingly supportive of female leaders. "I've seen women in leadership roles here at The Flowery, and it's inspiring to see how the company creates opportunities for all individuals to succeed," Frohock says. "It's not about gender; it's about the dedication and hard work you put in. We're passionate about giving everyone the chance to rise through the ranks."

Citing the gift of an incredible mentor early in her career who inspired her to empower others, Frohock shares her true vocation for supporting women professionally. Noting that many of The Flowery's current female managers "began their careers with little prior experience or formal education," she praises how their "natural strengths, dedication, and commitment to personal and professional growth have enabled them to excel" at the company.

Frohock's personal connection to cannabis also informs her leadership approach. What started as a shift from wine to weed sparked her interest in the medicinal qualities of cannabis. The product's ability to change lives and offer relief to those in need resonates deeply with her, as she sees the industry's potential to make a profound impact on society. "Cannabis is not just a product—it's a transformative experience," Frohock adds. "I've seen so many people's lives improve, whether through medical cannabis or simply for recreational use, and that makes all the hard work worth it."

Looking ahead, Frohock is optimistic about The Flowery's future. The company is expanding rapidly in Florida and New York, with plans to open more stores and explore new sales avenues such as live-stream selling. With the cannabis industry continuing to evolve and mature, Frohock is excited to see where it leads. "The opportunities are endless, and we're just getting started," she says. "As a company, we're committed to growing alongside the industry and continuing to push the boundaries of what's possible."

Under Frohock's leadership, The Flowery is well-positioned for continued success. Through her creative marketing strategies, passion for the product, and dedication to growth, she's helping shape the future of cannabis retail and customer experience. @floweryflorida @steph_frohock theflowery.co



Collabs With artists like J. Cole, A Boogie Wit Da Hoodie, Don Toliver, Fabolous, More, this birthday bash definitely encapsulated Cash Cobain's desire to bring the energy stayed high from start to finish, soundtracked by NY's finest, feature touch, photo going appearance by YG Marley, and amplified by Dank's signature touch, photo

BIFFILLY



Remuty and the BUD (GET): The Why's of Rising Hair Costs.

In recent years, the cost of hair services has steadily increased, prompting many to question the reasons behind this trend. While fluctuations in pricing can vary by location and salon, several key factors contribute to the rising expenses associated with hair care and styling.

> Increased Operating Costs. One of the most significant factors

service pricing is the rising operational costs faced by salons. Expenses such as rent, utilities, and insurance have increased, particularly in urban areas where the demand for salon space is high. Additionally, the cost of professional-grade products used in services, such as shampoos, conditioners, and color treatments, has also risen, which directly impacts service pricing.

Skill and Expertise. The demand for skilled hair professionals has led to increased costs. As the beauty industry evolves, stylists are expected to stay current with trends and techniques through ongoing education and training. Many salons invest in advanced training for their staff, which translates to higher wages for experienced professionals. As stylists hone their skills, their pricing

reflects their expertise, driving up service costs.

Product Quality and Sustainability. Consumers are increasingly prioritizing high-quality and sustainable products. Salons that focus on using organic, cruelty-free, or eco-friendly products often have higher supply costs. These products not only align with the values of many consumers, but also require stylists to be knowledgeable about their benefits and application, further justifying increased service

Changing Trends and Treatments. The beauty industry is marked by rapid trends and innovations. New techniques—such as balayage, keratin treatments, and specialty coloring methods-often require specialized skills and tools. As these treatments become more popular, salons may raise prices to accommodate the additional time and expertise needed to deliver these services effectively.

Economic Inflation. Like many sectors, the beauty industry is not immune to the effects of broader economic trends. Inflation can impact everything from product costs to labor expenses. As the general cost of living rises, consumers may see that reflected in the pricing of their hair services.

Market Demand and Competition. Salons also respond to market demand. In areas where demand for hair services is high, salons may increase prices to balance their customer base and ensure profitability. Conversely, competition among salons can lead to varied pricing, where some may lower prices to attract clients while others may raise theirs based on perceived value and quality.

The rising cost of hair services is a multifaceted issue influenced by operating costs, skill levels, product quality, and economic conditions. Understanding these factors can help consumers make informed decisions about their hair care choices. While the investment in hair services may seem substantial, many find that the benefits-ranging from enhanced confidence to self-expression—make the expense worthwhile.



By Lindsay Loo Lindsay Loo wants to do your hair! Get 15 percent off any service by using discount code HONEY15 when you book. Visit jlbyrd.com or follow @iamlindsayloo on Instagram for details.



Dumont, New Jersey—home to the whimsical, one-of-a-kind floral fantasy known as Larkspur Botanicals. On a crisp spring day, Honeysuckle Media had the pleasure of spending time with Lindsey Neff, the founder and creative force behind the international floral design studio that's redefining how we think about blooms, branding, and beauty.

Meet the Bloom Bringer

"I always work," Lindsey laughs, surrounded by curiosities, crystals, vintage lingerie, and a garden that's about to burst into color. "My hand touches everything."

And it shows.

From large-scale installations for brands like Smirnoff, Venmo, and Belvedere, to immersive, photo-ready environments, every petal at Larkspur Botanicals is purposeful. Lindsey isn't just building floral designs—she's blooming entire experiences. Whether it's a flower wall that caused a photo frenzy at the NYC Flower Show or a mobile bouquet bar pulled up in a retro art car, her work turns spaces into memories. Among the many innovative kinds of activations that Larkspur is known for, Lindsey has crafted head-turning sets like the viral Bath & Bodyworks x Bridgerton Experience, provided unique pressed-flower tattoos at everything from Pride parades to prestigious business conferences, led candlemaking sessions that allowed people to choose their own scent-sations... And she's built practically everything by hand, from the ground up. When you hire her, you get a professional visionary who defines "she can do it all."

The Secret Garden: A Living Set

Out back, past a whitewashed fence and tucked away behind the main studio, lies the secret garden—an artful patch of paradise that was once just a gritty storage space.

"We spray painted it and started using it differently last year," Lindsey says. "Now we take calls here, use the benches, and store things like the flower cart—but it's also a place to just reflect. A garden with secrets."

By July, the space explodes into full bloom. "We've got cosmos, morning glories, heirloom basils, big sunflowers—cut flowers for days." Even the props are active members of the garden. And then there's Cleo, the studio cat, who rules the garden's vintage clawfoot tub like a throne. "Sometimes I throw her ball in there and it's like cat Thunderdome. She might go viral one day."

Everywhere you look, there's some beautifully strange detail—a thrifted treasure, a faded bank ledger from the 1800s (great for "spell book" aesthetics), or a perfectly placed brass trinket. "When you're here to shoot content, you never know what you'll need," Lindsey says. "But chances are, I've got it."

The Magic Is in the Details

From a styling closet full of vintage pieces to an ever-changing inventory of floral props, Lindsey's studio is more than a workspace—it's a living archive of stories.

"There's a bed scene here, a piano vignette over there," she says, walking us through. "We build everything custom. That velvet bed? It's made from two antique desks I got from a defunct door factory in Englewood. Built it myself—solid wood, no creaking. That's important for boudoir shoots."

She's thought of everything: from four types of velvet on the bed to satin sheets in ivory, pink, black, and green—each chosen for the way they photograph. "We wanted something inclusive. Something that doesn't feel rickety or off-limits for people of different shapes, sizes, or ages. Like, if it's your 50th birthday and you want to feel gorgeous? This is your moment."

Raised by Creatives, Built by Hand

With a contractor father who once worked on Irving Berlin's estate and a mother who ran a landscape design business, Lindsey was born to build. "I laid these floors myself," she says proudly, motioning to the bright white studio upstairs. "I can't build a house, but I can build a shelter. I'm ready when it all goes to shit."

This do-it-yourself ethos powers the entire space, from electrical wiring to hand-built photo sets. "You just figure it out. That's what building is"

As a woman who designs, constructs, and installs large-scale floral pieces—often in male-dominated industries like cannabis—Lindsey has stories. "I've done walkthroughs where they don't expect you to know how to do anything. But I just let the work speak for itself. You can go to Edgewater right now—there's an installation we did that's still standing after five years, despite sun, wind, and everything else."

She nods. "I don't get too caught up in proving myself. I'm too busy creating."

A Collection of Curiosities

The studio is filled with visual treasures: vintage chandeliers, silk slips, glass bottles, wigs, lace, beads. "I collect a lot. Sometimes for ten years. And then one day, I sell the whole collection."

But even the giveaways are unforgettable, since Larkspur's clients can run the gamut from luxury brands to worldwide favorites to those in edgier industries. "Chaturbate and MyFreeCams send us merch—like onesies, hats, and random branded gear. Great for shoots. We usually have plenty to spare."

And if you're lucky enough to step into Larkspur Botanicals' headquarters, you'll find rooms dripping in aesthetic possibility—whether it's for a sultry shoot, an ethereal branding campaign, or just a moment of stillness under a garden arch.

Where to Find the Magic

"I don't really want to be found most days," Lindsey laughs. "You'll need God, a fat checkbook, a pen with ink in it, and a compass. And at least two different types of vehicles. No, I'm just joking—Instagram works."

@larkspurbotanicals is the official page, but really? "Just look around. If you see a flower installation that feels different—it's probably ours."

Want to book a shoot or brand activation with Larkspur Botanicals? Slide into the DMs or head to their site. Just bring a little imagination, and leave with a lot of content.



How Discarded Weed Bags Became Art in "O. I 25oz"

The real magic of 0.125oz lies in the visuals. Pflieger's

images transform crumpled, tossed-out bags into carefully

composed portraits. Each photograph is treated

with reverence, as if the packaging were

a rare artifact. And in a way,

it is.

Walk through the streets of Brooklyn-Williamsburg, Bushwick, Bed-Stuy-and you'll see them. Bright, cartooncolored weed bags tossed on the sidewalk like candy wrappers. Some shimmer with foil finishes, others mimic cereal boxes or designer labels. They're easy to miss, easy to dismiss. But to French photographer Vincent Pflieger, better known as Streetadelic, they're not trash. They're a message.

"These bags are more than litter — they're urban artifacts," Pflieger says. "They tell a story of a cultural transition in real

That story is the beating heart of 0.125oz, Pflieger's new photo project, art book, and cultural magazine that documents over 1,000 mylar cannabis bags collected across New York over the past four years. It's a deep dive into the street aesthetics of weed — and the strange space where DIY hustle meets a booming industry still finding its footing.

A Brooklyn Story Told in Mylar

Pflieger first noticed the discarded bags on his daily walks through the borough. At first, he picked one up out of curiosity. Then another. Then ten. Eventually, he built an archive of nearly 2,000 unique designs — a surreal collection of unofficial weed packaging, each one hinting at a brand, an idea, or an inside joke.

"In France, everything is regulated. It's clinical. But here in New York, before licenses rolled out, you had these bursts of design happening on the street level - wildly creative, deeply unofficial, and hyperlocal," Pflieger

The project's name, 0.125oz, refers to the average weight of a bag of cannabis flowers — an eighth of an ounce — but also serves as a metaphor. Each bag represents a small dose of design, a trace of a bigger cultural wave. Together, they form a mosaic of New York in the in-between: postlegalization, pre-regulation, and pulsing with aesthetic

innovation.

"Street packaging is an act of storytelling," Pflieger "There's to pop — fast,

The styles range from parody (bags that riff on Sour Patch Kidsor Froot Loops) to luxury (think metallic logos that channel

that has

Supreme Louis Vuitton). Some are aggressively loud, others sly and subtle. All of them speak to a broader trend: cannabis as lifestyle, identity, and commerce.

"Each bag is a small rebellion," says Pflieger. "And also a marker of where we are in the cannabis conversation - caught between old stigmas and new branding dreams."

advertising budget. Just design

hard, and often anonymously."

VOLUME 21



By Chloé Harper Gold

In April 2019, reports about cannabis users sustaining severe lung injuries after using vape pens started to make headlines. By February 2020, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), over 2,000 people had been hospitalized for e-cigarette or vaping-associated lung injury (EVALI); 68 people died because of it. The outbreak, dubbed VapeGate, was caused by untested products containing additives like vitamin E acetate sold through the illicit market. Even so, it shook things up in the legal cannabis space.

"People were scared to touch weed pens. They thought you'd go into a legal dispensary, [vape], and your lungs would explode," Rosie Mattio, founder and CEO of Mattio Communications, remembers.

VapeGate was disquieting...but not destabilizing. Mattio mobilized. Her firm teamed up with one of California's biggest testing labs, CannaSafe, for an informational harm reduction campaign. The premise was simple, but effective: they bought legal Stiizzy vape pens from a licensed dispensary, sourced knock-offs from the illicit market, and tested the products, showing that the counterfeit vapes contained harmful chemicals while the others did not.

Mattio Communications was able to place this campaign in national publications and on TV programs like The Today Show. And then they started working with other companies in the cannabis space to develop more.

"One of my favorite things about this industry is the collaboration. I remember being on a call with, like, every publicist in the industry to figure out how we were going to solve this problem together," Mattio says. "In no other industry have I seen companies collaborate like this. I made lifelong friends with people who are supposed to be my competitors."

Mattio has been a practitioner of PR since graduating from Boston University in 2003, starting at an agency before going solo, and developing an expertise in the specialty food and technology beats. While she had enjoyed consuming cannabis in her twenties, she put it on the back burner when she and her husband started having kids. But then when her family moved from New York to Seattle in 2013 for her husband's job, she and Mary Jane were reacquainted.

"We all moved out there right around the time that cannabis became legal for adult use in Washington State," she says. "I started seeing other moms in the carpool lane who would have vape pens in their bags, and see lines outside of the dispensaries."

In 2014, one of Mattio's clients booked her to do a crowdfunding campaign for a cannabis cookbook. To say that Mattio nailed it would be an understatement. Mainstream media reporters from The New York Times, Fast Company, and Mashable were all dying to write about it.

"Nobody was really pitching them cannabis news," she says. "A little light bulb went off in my head: I could bring my mainstream background to the cannabis industry, doing mainstream PR."

Thus, Mattio Communications was born. Now, 10 years later, it's the largest cannabis marketing firm in the country, with offices in New York, Los Angeles, and Toronto, 45 employees, and nearly 50 clients. Additionally, Mattio Communications' services have expanded to include social media, SEO content, and investor relationships across the supply chain

"When I got started, I had no idea what I was getting myself into. I was so used to pitching popcorn to Shape magazine, I figured it would be somewhat similar. If you could tell a great story, you'd be able to pitch a story," Mattio says.

She remembers that despite her initial success, it was "an uphill battle" to get cannabis into the mainstream media, mostly because at the time, only a handful of states had an adult-use market, meaning only a fraction of a publication's readership would be able to legally obtain the products being written about. Mattio remembers that although the reporters she had relationships with were always supportive, it was hard to convince them to write stories about cannabis.

"But fast forward 10 years later, there's somebody at Vogue writing about cannabis, there's probably five reporters at Forbes, two or three at Bloomberg...Cannabis touches so many different parts of industry, whether that be lifestyle, business, or regulatory. The

opening up of mainstream media has been a big shift. And because more markets have become legal, there's a bigger market to to be able to sell our wares and be able to tell our story."

But even so, cannabis PR has its share of difficulties, many of which stem from regulations and guidelines varying from state to state. When cannabis companies operate in multiple states, campaigns become even more challenging.

"You can put up a billboard in Pennsylvania, but you can't in New York, for example. Sometimes we have to run some of our verbiage by the state regulator before even putting out a press release," Mattio says.

There's also the issue of not being able to send products to writers.

"When I worked with a healthy popcorn company and we would launch new product, we would make a really pretry box, take it to FedEx, and ship it to the reporter. They would taste it and write a story. But if I have a product in California, it's illegal to ship it to New York. So how am I getting somebody in New York to write about a product they can't try? These are things most people don't think about. When I was doing PR in in Washington State, we had an edible client, one of our first clients, and we spent months putting together a campaign around this new mint they were launching with a very special type of tin that they were selling them in, and then the regulator changed the rules on packaging and the way that you can market to prevent marketing to minors. Even though this product wasn't, we had to scrap it entirely, and the client needed to redo their packaging. We had spent nine months putting together this campaign. Imagine the expense and resources. This is a very different industry, and just being in it for 10 years, you understand the nuances, and that you have to be quick and agile because things change all the time. And for me, while it's challenging, it's part of the fun of it, too. You get to use your mental muscle."

Mattio is diligent about adhering to regulations, and understands the need to prevent marketing cannabis to minors—she has four daughters ranging in ages 10 to 15. Mattio doesn't hide her cannabis usage, treating it instead like any other legal substance an adult might partake in, such as a glass of wine.

"My husband and I explain that it's a choice for adults; some people like alcohol, some people like cannabis, and some people like both. The most important thing is that you do it in a tested, regulated way. You do it when you're of age, you don't get into a car [after consuming]," she says. "There's a wellness and medicine part of it. But my children are underage, and we are a very strict household. We will not be the house where kids are drinking beer in the basement," she adds.

Because cannabis is a controlled substance, Mattio shares that she also has serious conversations with her daughters about making sure their friends don't go looking for cannabis in their house ("Ilock my stuff up in a box because this has to be personal responsibility. We're pretty careful about it."). Although, she notes, her kids don't have much of an interest in cannabis, at least not yet.

"I don't want them to do either, but I'd much prefer my children to smoke weed than drink alcohol and get crazy. You know, some terrible things can happen when kids get drunk. But I feel happy that we're in a time where adolescents are drinking less and that cannabis is a choice to them as they become adults, and it's not something they have to buy from a dealer when they go to college or whenever it is. I feel lucky to be raising my children in an era where cannabis is a choice for them."

But even though her daughters aren't interested in consuming cannabis, her two oldest girls have already invested in a few cannabis stocks. Luckily, they have a mother who encourages entrepreneurship, especially among women.

"I feel very grateful and lucky to be surrounded by so many female entrepreneurs in the space. There's always so much more that we can do, and I wish there was more female leadership, but I have a amazing network of female entrepreneurs who are clients and friends. It's the greatest reward of being in this industry. We're building this together. We have a sense of pride because we can collaborate and give each other referrals and give each other advice," she says.

"I also think there's something really special about women in cannabis. The plant is female. There's just something poetic about that. Women come to me and ask me about joining this industry, and I always think women have to work harder than their male counterparts, but I do think that there is something to be said about the fact that this is an industry of startups. We're very hybrid. It's a really great opportunity for women, especially mothers."

If Mattio imparts any message, she wants it to be

If Mattio imparts any message, she wants it to be that women lift each other up and find allyship with other women, as well as with men.

"There's nothing more gratifying to me than connecting a woman with a job," she says. "Because this industry was born in the 2000s, the playing field is a little more even than it was back in my mother's day. We have the opportunity to define what this industry looks like."

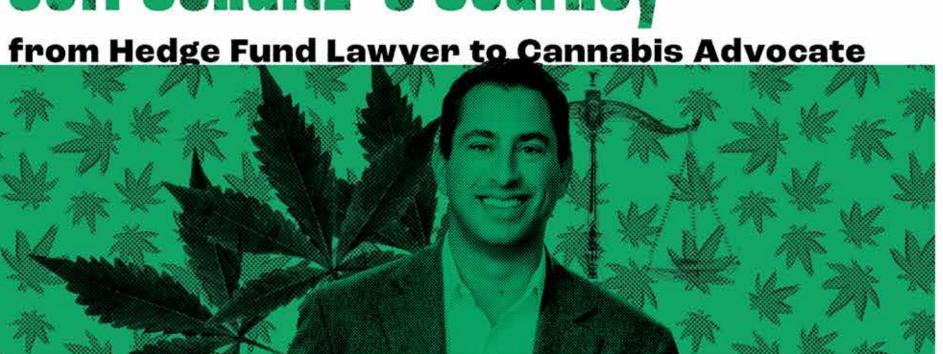
In addition to her passion for cannabis in a business context, Mattio is an enthusiastic consumer. She uses it to support her fitness goals, including training for body building competition, noting that smoking or vaping, as well as using infused massage oils, is a game changer for recovering from intense workouts. Mattio isn't a daily user, but imbibes during the weekend. She says she likes a good joint or a bong rip—preferably with one of her two favorite strains, Jack Herer and Cereal Milk. She also loves cannabis beverages, preferring them over alcoholic drinks. She's turned her friends onto them, too: "I can bring a cannabis beverage to a friend's house, we all have one or two, and feel great and not hungover!"

As much as the industry has changed and evolved over the past 10 years, Mattio knows that the landscape is far from finalized. She's looking forward to seeing how the cannabis industry, especially in her sector, will continue to grow.

"It's been such an incredible time in our nation's history," she says. "So I just feel really grateful to play a small part in that and be witness to this cultural shift. I'm really excited about what the future can be."



Jeff Schultz's Journey



As the cannabis industry continues to grow, few individuals offer a perspective as unique as Jeff Schultz. A former corporate and securities attorney in the hedge fund industry, Schultz's journey into cannabis law highlights how personal passion and professional expertise can intersect. What began as a curiosity in 2017 has since turned into a thriving career, positioning him as one of the nation's top cannabis attorneys.

THE SEEDS PLANTED

Schultz's interest in cannabis started during a trip to Colorado in 2017, shortly after the state legalized adultuse cannabis. As a long-time fan of the plant, Schultz was intrigued by how accessible cannabis had become, as well as the complex legal and business challenges that came with its legalization. "I was fascinated by it from day one," he recalls, noting his surprise at how quickly this new market unfolded. Despite his 18 years of experience as a hedge fund lawyer, Schultz felt a pull toward cannabis, recognizing its unique legal hurdles and business potential.

In 2018, the attorney met Sean Stiefel, the founder of Navy Capital, who was looking for a general counsel. Their chemistry was immediate, and Schultz soon joined Navy Capital, just before Canada legalized cannabis nationwide and California implemented its adult-use laws. At Navy Capital, Schultz gained a front-row seat to the cannabis industry's rapid growth. "I got a bird's-eye view of the industry, from public MSOs to early-stage investments," he says, reflecting on his role in shaping the emerging cannabis market.

Schultz worked with well-known companies like Connected, Alien Labs, and Cann, though not every investment was a success. He points out the cautionary tale of Pax, which raised \$400 million but ultimately failed to meet expectations. Despite setbacks like this, Schultz grew more committed to the industry, particularly when he became involved in cannabis advocacy. By 2019, he was deeply engaged in shaping New York's adult-use cannabis laws, advising industry leaders on the potential implications of the state's legalization efforts.

This advocacy role eventually led him back to private practice, where he joined Foley Hoag, a national law firm with a prominent cannabis practice. His experience in both corporate and regulatory matters made him an essential figure in New York's cannabis regulatory landscape. Working closely with decision-makers and operators, Schultz used his hedge fund experience to help businesses navigate the early stages of cannabis legalization.

IN A NEW YORK MINUTE

When discussing New York's cannabis rollout under the Marijuana Regulation and Taxation Act (MRTA) in 2021, Schultz acknowledges its ambitious goals, particularly around equity and restorative justice. However, he notes that the implementation process has been more challenging. "The MRTA was forward-thinking, but the execution was far from smooth," Schultz observes. Delays in license applications and financial support left many operators struggling, especially those from minority and women-owned businesses that were promised financial assistance.

Despite these challenges, Schultz remains optimistic about New York's future in cannabis. "We're still in the early stages," he says, highlighting the state's growing retail sector and progress being made. However, he acknowledges that the road ahead remains difficult, with some stores thriving while others struggle. "The data can be skewed by the outliers, and it's going to be a long journey," he adds.

Looking forward, Schultz believes the cannabis industry will continue to be unpredictable but full of potential. "I've stopped trying to predict the future of this industry," he admits, reflecting on the constant shifts in both the legal and business landscapes. He remains confident, however, that cannabis is here to stay. "As more states legalize, the federal government will eventually have to act, but when that happens, who knows?"

One of the key debates in the cannabis industry is the role of out-of-state brands in markets like New York. With West Coast companies flooding the state, concerns have been raised by local producers. Schultz, however, is unconcerned. "It's not an 'us vs. them' situation," he says. "The market will decide. If consumers want these brands, they'll succeed; if not, they won't." Schultz points out that local brands like HPI and House of Flowers have found success, proving that New York's homegrown companies can thrive alongside out-of-state players.

FAMILY MATTERS

In his personal life, Schultz takes a thoughtful and responsible approach to cannabis use. A father of two, he refrains from consuming cannabis during work hours, preferring flower or edibles depending on the situation. "I'm a parent, so I have to be responsible," he says, noting that cannabis has become a healthier alternative to alcohol in his routine. He's cut back on drinking, saying that cannabis allows him to wake up feeling refreshed without the hangovers that come with alcohol.

Schultz talks openly with his children about cannabis aiming to eliminate the stigma around it. "I talk to my daughter like it's alcohol," he explains. "It's something for adults, legal when you're old enough, but it's not harmless like other drugs." He values honesty and ensures his kids understand the limits and responsibilities associated with cannabis.

Looking to the future, Schultz isn't sure where the industry will take him, but he remains committed to it. "The cannabis industry is too dynamic to walk away from," he says, reflecting on the exciting challenges ahead. Even as the legal landscape evolves, Schultz's passion for the cannabis industry remains strong.

With years of experience in hedge funds, venture capital, and cannabis law, Schultz has become a key figure in the industry, guiding clients through legal complexities and advocating for a more equitable market. His journey from hedge fund lawyer to cannabis advocate shows the power of following one's passion while leveraging professional skills. As the cannabis industry continues to grow Schultz's voice will play an influential role in shaping its

SARA PAYAN'S HEALING THROUGH CAINABIS AND COMMUNICATION

Sara Payan's voice has become a powerful force in reshaping the conversation around cannabis. From her roots as a civil rights activist to surviving cancer and becoming a leading cannabis advocate, her journey reflects a commitment to both healing and challenging the status quo. Through her podcast *Planted with Sara*, her work as a strategic advisor, and her open public speaking, Payan is creating space for honest dialogue and pushing for reforms that can benefit everyone.

A PERSONAL REVOLUTION: FROM CANCER SURVIVOR TO CANNABIS ADVOCATE

Sara's entry into cannabis advocacy began with a personal battle: her diagnosis with colon cancer. She vividly recalls a moment when a friend suggested cannabis to help manage the nausea from chemotherapy. "The smooth muscle relaxants the doctors prescribed weren't working," she says. "They didn't make me feel 'groovy'; they just calmed down my internal organs. Cannabis, however, helped me eat again. It was a lifesaver in many ways."

But the benefits of cannabis went beyond just physical relief. Payan found it offered emotional and psychological comfort during a challenging time in her life. "I was able to avoid opiates and other pharmaceuticals that could've caused serious complications for me," she shares. "For someone with colon cancer, constipation from opiates can be life-threatening. Cannabis allowed me to avoid that." This experience played a pivotal role in her shift from civil rights work to the cannabis industry. After her remission, Payan's new career path began in a dispensary, which eventually led to the creation of *Planted with Sara*, a podcast aimed at bridging the gap between public understanding and cannabis use.

CREATING A SPACE FOR CANNABIS CONVERSATIONS

For her, entering the cannabis industry was more than a career move—it was about creating a platform that could empower others to explore healing and understanding. Early on, she noticed that dispensary staff were not just product sellers; they often became emotional guides for customers dealing with tough situations. "I took it upon myself to create robust training programs," she says, "emphasizing the human side of cannabis interactions, turning staff into empathetic guides rather than just sellers."

In 2019, Payan launched *Planted with Sara*, a podcast that quickly grew into a global hub for cannabis education. "A lot of people told me I should do a podcast, and I initially thought, 'Who wants to hear me talk?" she recalls. "But maybe that's what makes me a good interviewer—I'm genuinely interested in what people have to say." The podcast features a broad range of voices—from industry leaders to everyday users—helping to normalize cannabis through compelling storytelling.

"Conversation is normalization," Payan explains. "And by hearing stories from people who are using cannabis in their everyday lives, we help destigmatize it." As the podcast gained popularity, it earned accolades, including an MJ (Marijuana Business) Award, cementing its role as a crucial platform for cannabis education.

BEYOND CANNABIS: THE POWER OF HEALING CONVERSATIONS

While cannabis is central to Payan's work, the conversations on *Planted with Sara* often touch on deeper themes such as grief, mortality, and personal growth. One particularly meaningful conversation was with the late David Crosby of Crosby, Stills, Nash

& Young. "We started talking about cannabis, but then we moved on to music, and then he shared with me how he was facing his own mortality," Payan recalls. "That conversation was deeply personal, and it ended up helping him find some peace before he passed."

Payan's openness about her own experience with cancer and her reflections on life and death have led to impactful, often emotional discussions. "Our society has such a strange relationship with death," she shares. "It's the one thing we all know is coming, and yet we're terrified of it. Learning to accept it, to talk about it, has been liberating for me."

CANNABIS: A TOOL, NOT A CURE-ALL

Despite the positive impact cannabis has had on her life, Payan is careful to emphasize that it is not a cure-all. "I've heard people say that cannabis cured my cancer. That's bullshit," she says. "Cannabis is a tool. There's a lot of work being done around cannabis as a therapy, and some people see remarkable results. But it's not a cure, and we need to have honest conversations about it."

Her advocacy also focuses on educating people about responsible cannabis use. "Cannabis can work wonders, but some people are sensitive to certain compounds like CBD," she points out. "And if you're on certain medications, always consult your doctor. It's about understanding your body and how cannabis fits into your health journey."

Payan is also vocal about the need for reform in cannabis policy. "Cannabis is expensive, and people often complain about product availability," she notes. "But that's not about greed—it's about outdated policies and a lack of understanding from lawmakers. We need to push for

A LEGACY OF NORMALIZATION AND EMPOWERMENT

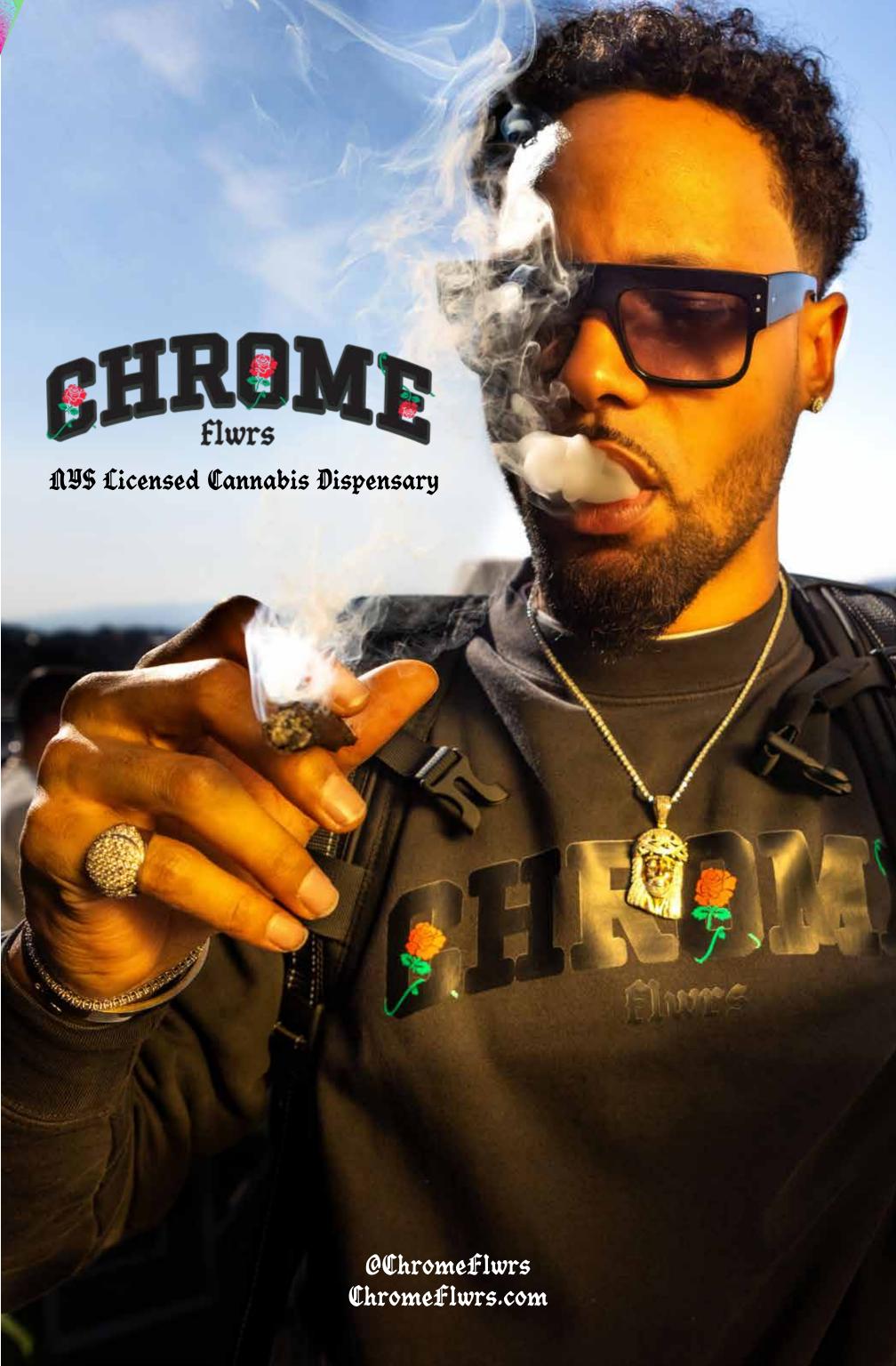
change, for policies based on facts, not stigma."

Looking to the future, Payan remains focused on her mission to normalize cannabis and empower others to reclaim their own healing journeys. "I never imagined this would be my path," she reflects. "But here I am, and I've found my calling. It's about helping people understand that they have options, that they don't have to settle for what the system tells them. That's the beauty of what cannabis can offer—a new way to heal, to be, and to live fully."

Through *Planted with Sara*, Payan is building a community of learning, connection, and healing. "It's about helping people understand that they have options—that's the beauty of what cannabis can offer—a new way to heal, to be, and to live fully," she adds, underscoring her ongoing dedication to those on their healing journeys.

Payan's journey shows how personal experiences can lead to significant cultural change. From her background in civil rights to her transformation into a cannabis advocate, Payan's work has sparked important conversations. With her podcast, her advocacy, and her candid reflections on life's toughest challenges, Payan is helping to create a world where cannabis is not only normalized but also understood and respected as a valuable tool for healing. Listen to *Planted with Sar*a and join her mission to transform cannabis culture, one conversation at a time.

For more follow: @plantedwithsara, saramitrapayan; https://plantedwithsara.com





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